This Month:

JOSEPHINE HERBST, author of *The Executioner Waits,* and other novels, is now preparing a book of short stories for early publication.

ILYA EHRENBOURG, whose reporting of the European scene has created a great deal of interest in this country, is a well known Soviet novelist.

CHARLES BRADFORD, who lives in Los Angeles, says about himself: "I have been writing three years. First published in the *New Masses.* I don't know how I have lived these years, but I don't think about it much. I purposely avoid thinking about it. All I know is that I am doing just what I want to do. I write the kind of stories I want to write and the *New Masses,* the *Daily Worker,* and now the *Partisan Review & Anvil,* take them. It's pretty fine, not to be forced to be a hypocrite!"

ALAN CALMER, an editor of the anthology, *Proletarian Literature in the United States,* has published critical articles and reviews.

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH'S poem, a note on Matthew Arnold's classic of Victorian sentiment, "Dover Beach," will be included in his forthcoming volume of verse, *Public Speech.*

KENNETH FEARING is the author of two volumes of verse, *Angel Arms* and *Poems.*

MURIEL RUKEYSER'S first book of poems is reviewed in this issue

SAMUEL PUTNAM, biographer, critic, and ace of translators, has frequently contributed to previous numbers of *Partisan Review.* He translated the articles by Gide and Ehrenbourg in this issue.

JAMES NEUGASS lives in New York City. He has contributed to several anthologies and to numerous periodicals.

NATHAN ASCH, whose latest novel is called *The Valley,* is at present engaged in writing a book about his travels in the United States.

ANDRE GIDE'S autobiography, *If It Die,* was recently published in this country by Random House.

PRUDENCIO DE PEREDA writes about himself: "I was born twenty-four years ago in Brooklyn of Spanish parents and we stayed in that boro until I had completed elementary parochial school. Then we moved to Queens and were in time for the sewer and subsequent tax scandals. We are still here. I graduated from high school in Richmond Hill and then entered City College, leaving that institution in 1933 with a Bachelor of Arts degree and an open—I mean empty—mind. I wanted to see the world, so I sold an insurance policy and went to visit my aunts and uncles in the 'New' Spain. While I was there I saw the killing of the revolution by the newly freed Catholic women. I write all my stuff in English but try to give it a Spanish flavor when dealing with Spain as in "The Runners".

JAMES T. FARRELL, author of the Studs Lonigan trilogy, is preparing a volume of criticism for publication this spring.

EDWARD NEWHOUSE, author of *You Can't Sleep Here,* is at work on a new novel.

DAVID RAMSEY has written on political and scientific subjects for the *New Masses,* the *New Republic,* and other magazines.

OBED BROOKS'S essay on Archibald MacLeish appeared in the recently published anthology of proletarian literature.

RUTH LECHLITNER has contributed reviews and poetry to various periodicals.

HAROLD ROSENBERG, who has published criticism and poetry, is one of the editors of *Art Front.*

JACK CONROY is at present working on a book of reportage about automobile workers.

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM is the author of critical articles published in *The Symposium,* the *New Masses,* and other periodicals. He edited a critical anthology called *The New Criticism.*

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Partisan Review & Anvil

MARCH
1936

The Golden Harvest

JOSEPHINE HERBST

FRED RIEGEL lived at the crossroads in a very small, two-story house. One fork led over the hill to the wild back country, where the farms were poor and deer-hunting good, and the other turned sharply through the holler past the summer places of city folks to the church and graveyard.

Fred lived alone. A few years back, his aunt of ninety years who was stone blind had lived with him. Because he drank, the old woman's niece from Philadelphia used to come and try to take her away. The aunt was an old maid and would not leave her nephew, not even after someone stole all their chickens during one of his sprees. She finally fell and cut her head while he was off on some jamboree. The niece came and, seeing the blackening blood on the old woman's white hair, got in a rage and packed her off. Fred swore he never wanted to see the old bitch again, and he went off on a crying jag that nearly finished him.

When he came to, his aunt had written from Philadelphia to keep the oatmeal covered, and how sorry she was not to have washed the comforter on his bed. "Be a good boy," she wrote. "You've a kind heart. You're bright and should try to make something of yourself for the sake of your poor father and mother, and not drink any more."

For the sake of his dead father and mother, and because he really believed he had something in him, Fred had aspired to make something of his life for some time. He wanted to be useful and to be looked up to, and he didn't know where to put his strength.

It was a little late in the day for aspirations. His hair was getting pretty grey. The framed photographs of his father and mother, hanging side by side in the upstairs of his house, were already terribly old-fashioned. Fred's father had had some military post in the German army, and his mother had been a German lady. The father's chest was decorated, and he had imitation Kaiser Wilhelm moustaches. His mother wore a Kaiserin pompadour and the resigned, housewife expression of mingled sorrow and duty that had been so characteristic of the wife of the ruler. Not many people in the village had seen the photographs. Few would have appreciated them, Fred said, when he did finally favor a visitor.

He was modest about his parents, but he believed firmly in their quality. His belief separated him a little from everyone in the village. Only his father's death before the war had saved Fred from the German army. He had been sent like a package to this country, to relatives. At that time he had relatives who were Somebody, but he was handed over to one of the lesser lights. He had a second cousin, a woman, singing in opera, and there was a Congressman from Pennsylvania who belonged to the same family. As a young fellow Fred had been proud of these relatives, but as time went by, he seldom mentioned them. A kind of shame hung over him for belonging to people who might have helped him in his struggles and who had not lifted a finger.

About his parents he could maintain pride. They had failed him only because life had failed them. They would have expected him to make something grand of himself in the big, free America. As a boy Fred had been very handsome, and as a man he retained most of his good looks. Even after a spree, he managed to look distinguished, with his greying hair and his fine profile with the head flung back.

It was sometimes a mystery to the city folks who had summer places there how Fred came to stay in the valley. He was better, they said, than the common garden variety, but in other ways he was not so good. His holding powers were not so strong. What was worse, he couldn't learn how to find whatever would have steadied him. If a woman might have been a steadying influence, Fred never found out. He wasn't sure he wanted marriage, but sometimes when he was beginning to be tight he would single out someone in the village and tell that person solemnly that he was going to take a wife.

He was one of the greatest going-to-do-its in the countryside, and the village folk were foolish enough to laugh at him for it. No one read more than Fred. He was a sucker for every fellow working his way through college. They used to sic one another on him, and he'd fall every time. Standing in the doorway of his house with the cold stove behind him and a cold loaf of bread hacked on the table, the sight of a face friendly with the deceit of wanting to sell something was too great a temptation. He'd invite the fellow in and listen to his harangue. If he was especially lonesome, he'd pretend to be a little hard of hearing, so the fellow would repeat. The sound of people talking a lot of

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fine stuff was music to him. He'd thaw out, get up, briskly stick kindling in the stove and, if it was a cold day, make coffee. He never turned the boys away without an order. "I know what you're up against," he would smile, digging his contribution out of his old pants grandly. He took magazines for gardening, the women's journals, farm publications and stock raisers' bulletins. Evenings when the men gathered at Artie Young's general store and post-office, it gave him importance to have Art hand out mail to him across the counter.

"Well, Fred, see you're laying in a store of Sears-Roebuck toilet paper for the winter," heehawed one of the Miller boys.

"Just see you don't come sneaking around borrowing it off me," Fred cracked back, laughing and enjoying himself. Nights in the store were too short by far. Artie turned off the lights shortly after nine, and there was a long evening ahead. His own house stood solitary at the edge of the village. Sometimes he'd hate to walk home past the lighted windows where whole families sat clustered behind glass, as exclusive as jewels in a showcase. He'd crack his fingers in a kind of despair, feeling the earth bitter cold against his feet through the thin soles.

Up the holler road it was worse. The city families lived there, and in the summer time the sound of their high jinks floated way down the valley. He might be sitting on his porch, watching the moon come up—there she hung in the evening sky—and up the valley you could hear the laughing and cutting up floating down in the stillness. Sometimes he walked up that road. He'd stand in the dust and listen to the brook and talk out loud to himself, telling the world what he'd do. He'd watch the lights in the Chance house across the brook, and sometimes on the other side of the glass him and her would be playing checkers. The Chances had a big pool beyond the bend, deep in the trees, and they used to go together to swim around in the afternoons. After a hard day's work digging garden for Mrs. Gridley, Fred used to sneak off the road into the trees and take a dip in their pool himself. It made him feel good, as if he weren't cut off from the world the way he mostly felt. In naked that way, the way they went too, he felt fine and as if he could tear right ahead now and make a showing.

He'd tramp back to the house and go through all his magazines looking for schemes to get ahead. There were still plenty growing on trees, to judge by the ads. You could make a fortune raising rabbits or mushrooms. All a man needed was to get out of the ordinary rut. Be a pathfinder. Sitting in his house with the kerosene lamp turned high so it smoked chimney, Fred was fired to get ahead. He would quit being a bum, paint his house, get new clothes and shave oftener. He would even get a wife. He would swallow his resentment at the Gridleys for their pretended interest in his reform just so they could get their chores done. He would pull their weeds and hoe their potatoes and sweat hauling stones for their walls to get money scraped up for rabbits.

His front yard was cluttered with rabbit hutches on a sure-fire business proposition at one time. They bred like mosquitoes, and Lord God what a mess they made. They fairly stank him out of house and home. Fred was on the run, hunting for cabbage and lettuce for them. The ad had said that all rabbits would be bought back by the firm, but when Fred achieved a shipment the place had gone out of business. They didn't even leave an address.

It was the same bad luck with the mushrooms. You paid eight dollars cash for the seed, the company to buy back the crop. It looked sure-fire. Fred was handicapped for a good barn to start with, but Mr. Chance turned over his big stone barn and even helped make the bed. The two fellows sweated away for a couple of days. Mrs. Chance came out looking on at the work. Fred said he would give her a great big mess of the very first mushrooms to come up. They were going to be humdingers, extra size Jumbos.

Chance got interested in the proposition himself, and the two men came every day to hang over the barn door and peer down at the mushroom bed in the cool dark. It was about the happiest time of Fred's life in that valley. The bed was dug deep, with a fine graded assortment of cow manure and fresh earth. Every day Fred carefully sprinkled it from a big can. He'd even lean over, smoothing out imaginary ridges in the soil. The stuff was due to hatch like a chick, crack out of the box, at a certain time. On the scheduled day, Fred was hanging around all morning. Nothing happened, but the earth heaved in a couple of places. The next day two puny mushrooms cracked out. Fred wouldn't pick them; he wanted a big mess for Mrs. Chance. The day after one more mushroom came up, and then the golden harvest was over.

Fred's heart just about broke. He had been counting his chickens before they hatched, night after night. He had got so far as to figure on a radio and maybe a second hand car. Him and the boys could take a run up to Canada, like the big shots did. With this failure, he didn't seem to know which way to turn. There was nothing for it but to tank up and forget. He went on a bust and danced down the road past the village homes with his pants wide open. He told Mr. Schoop to go whittle his stick. Fred had a special grudge against Schoop because he had made trouble for the boys who worked in the same mill. When the slack season backed up on them, Schoop had scurried to the boss and said he would be glad to work for less so he wouldn't get laid off. It brought down wages all around. Fred now told Schoop he was a lousy c—s—, and then

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he went and pissed on Artie Young's front lawn.

On this occasion he did not take out any grudges against the city folks up the holler. For one thing the grudges there went deeper down. In the village, the folks had come off the farm, settled in the little chickenmanure town and thought they were Somebodies. They gabbled and gossiped about Fred's drinking. They slaved to keep their homes painted like Kingdom Come. They were good grist for the paper and pottery mills across the river. The farm boys were hog-tied with this bunch. The poor land wouldn't support the farm families any longer, and the boys gravitated to the mills as soon as they were old enough to lie about their ages. It was a tough break after the farm life, where a feller could use his legs and take a shot at a rabbit or a pheasant between times. If it weren't for the small town men, the farm boys would have liked to start something. As yet they didn't know just what, but they were getting fired up ready to go.

The farm boys often drank with Fred, and the whole bunch sometimes made a holy show of themselves on Sundays. But like him they had no money to spend and no cars, and unlike the village crowd they didn't have any little two-by-four houses to worship. The city folks, sailing by waving their hands grandly as if they were giving the boys a treat and were on top of the world and meant to stay there forever, sure riled their souls. Rye was the only medicine. In the village they called Fred a demoralizer, but the boys just wondered where the heck they would go if it wasn't for Fred.

Fred didn't learn anything from his adventures with rabbits and mushrooms. He was all primed to bite off another chance. He took literally the notion that it was a free country and every man bound to rise eventually if he had the will. When he had come to this country as a boy his relatives had started him out in a factory. Then it was held against him he was unskilled, then they didn't need him, and finally he took to riding the rods, following work and crops pretty near over the whole damned map.

He hadn't always been a drinker. Drink had got him after the Key West tornado. Fred had been one of several hundred working for Flagler, building the railroad across the Keys. It was the tornado season, but they kept the men on just the same to hurry up the job. The storm rammed them like a brass ship out of hell when they were on a raft tied to the piling. The raft chipped loose, and the gang washed off, little by little. The damn sea inched up on them, licking its chops, growling and gobbling and chewing them up in its gullet. He would have got swilled off, too, if it hadn't been for Jensen. Jensen had tied him to the raft with his belt. Then Jensen went down slick as a knife.

Fred had been in a daze for a long time. He was one of the four survivors, and he still had the soaked Wobbly card that had been in his pocket. He kept that more as a remembrance of Jensen than for himself. Jensen hadn't just had a card so he could ride the rods without a fight. Jensen had been as proud of his card as an Elk's tooth. Fred remembered the time they were stringing lights up to make high jinks in honor of Flagler and "his great vision and achievement." Jensen had been a card, taking off the committee of town flunkeys. He had the boys splitting their sides with his take-offs. Then he had patted his pocket where the card was. "Let the high Mucky-mucks get their little brass key to their tin Jesus city," he says. "Let them. I got the key to the whole bloody world."

"Yep," he had said, boasting, "and to the *world to come.*"

At the time, Fred had been kind of confused. Jensen didn't believe in an ordinary heaven. He wasn't the kind to care about ghosts trailing around on balmy clouds. It had been right after that the storm came, and for a long time when Fred didn't amount to much for work he used to sit brooding over things Jensen had said. He had the feeling that if he could remember them right and string them together they would make sense and help him in his life. But he had gone back to his aunt's little house instead, and he kind of fell under her influence and the expectation that his parents would have had of him. He just became a tame dog for the city folks to kick around, with things stinging him but never again enough guts to leave the valley.

Along about November, Fred took another flier on an ad. It looked pretty good and gave a POSITIVE GUARANTEE with it. It was for painting postcards. It said that on account of the depression many people wouldn't be giving gifts and more would be giving cards. It said here's YOUR Little Gold Mine. It made a fair proposition of six lessons (reduced holiday terms) for five dollars, and after that every card you painted would get paid for in real CASH. Even a child could paint as many as SIXTY a day. You could get fifteen cents CASH for every card painted.

Fred was on air, and he kind of patronized the boys when they came around. He couldn't tell them what he was up to, for he was ashamed of the little brushes. They were hard to handle for mitts that were calloused with outdoor work and chapped by wind and washing in cold water. But he stuck right at it. He had sunk about all he had into the lessons, and he HAD TO WIN. This year he had been able to save mighty little from summer chores. The city folks had taken advantage of the hard times and had pared his wages down to twenty cents an hour. There was less work, and some of the boys fired from the mill had cut in on him. Only Mr. Schoop hung on regular, taking his cuts one right after the other like a little gentleman.

Along about Christmas, Fred got scared he wouldn't get in on the money, so he hurried up his

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lessons and wrote the firm a frightened letter. They came back grandly. "You have shown so much ability that our proposition should be a veritable gold mine for you. We are not a fly-by-night concern but operate all the year round. Once a Gaiety Card Man, always a Gaiety Card Man is the motto of hundreds of our men and boys. Get the wife to chip in and win some pin money on our special offer. Cash in on this Bonanza." Then there was a P. S. saying to send an advance of three dollars for forty cards just as "security." Fred dug up the three dollars, which they assured him would be "refunded," and waited for the cards.

The farm boys kept dropping in during the day hindering him, but he worked at night coloring little daisies and wreaths and golden-haired sweethearts looking out the windows of tiny coaches. The boys were beginning to talk wild, so that Fred even with his preoccupation would think of what they said after they were gone. Hens weren't laying. Cows were eating more feed than they were giving down milk. Folks were getting foreclosed, and lots were hungry enough to try for relief.

Fred thought proudly he would never take charity. Sometimes when the boys got angry and Pete Krieger said by God they couldn't take away a feller's place he'd worked for all his life, Fred felt he'd heard something like that before. There was something familiar about what the boys were saying. He'd figure it out when he got his money, and then he would be able to get electric lights like the city folks, and he would put on a big splash for the boys, with every damn bulb going on full tilt all over the house.

It took Fred several days hard, fidgety work to get the cards fixed up. Then he sent back the cards. He would get six dollars for them plus the three dollars advanced, making nine dollars. It was not much, but a starter. He felt good about it. He waited for ten days, and his stock of supplies was running low. Christmas was coming on. He wrote the firm again. Then he plucked up courage and wrote to Mrs. Gridley in the city, for whom he did the most work every summer. He asked if she would advance him five dollars, as he was all out of money and no work to be got. She didn't answer.

He had a fire in the stove, and it was too bad he couldn't eat wood because there was plenty of it. He had some flour, but the flour cakes began tasting like wool. When the boys dropped in he sat very still, looking kind of hurt and pale. They wondered what in hell had gotten into old Fred.

Day before Christmas, if he didn't get a package from the firm! He tore off the cover. It was his own cards back again. There was a breezy little note attached. "Dear Friend: Good work. We are sure of your success. Now take these cards to the many friends in your neighborhood that are certain to be anxious to encourage you, and you can easily get fifteen cents apiece for them. This will leave you a nice, net CASH reward. Then forward same amount as before for another batch and roll up the money. Easter cards are the next buy. Order now."

Fred sat a long time staring at the cards. No one had any money for a fifteen-cent card. Or a ten-cent one. Or a five-cent one. Then he got up stiffly and mixed up some flour pancakes and tried to fry them. There wasn't enough grease in the pan. He sat down again, and some of the flour paste stuck to the cards. He rubbed at them absently with his sleeve. The wind had begun to blow up and he could hear it chawing away at the windows. He shivered and got up and locked the door tight. There was a paper on the table, a letter he had begun. "Dear Aunt: I am getting along nicely. I just took up a very good proposition and expect . . . ." He crumpled the letter and absently wiped his nose on it. Then he sat listening to a roaring in his ears like the time the tornado broke. Even the floor seemed to heave like the water had when the tornado had been a long way off and there was a heavy groundswell under the raft shuddering like the beginning of an earthquake.

He tried to think what to do next. His heart felt eaten out of him. He was ashamed to try any more city folks. Hell, they didn't have gardens in winter, what did they care? Only that morning he had sneaked around to the relief office, hitchhiking all the way, to try for a little something to tide him over. After his big, mysterious hints to the boys he was ashamed to tell them. The preacher from the church up the holler had been there too, and he had carried on a confab with the old maid, looking at Fred while he talked. When it came his turn, the old maid had spoken up loud enough to be heard a block. She said they weren't there to help bums, but the deserving. If he had saved his money instead of blowing it out on filthy drink, he wouldn't be asking for charity. She said if she helped him she'd be robbing the deserving, and it should teach him a lesson, not that you could teach that kind of person (in a loud aside to the preacher) anything.

He stood in the kitchen, moving now and then to the window and back again, and dark came on. He lay down on the bed with his clothes on, and in the night he shivered and slept and woke and dozed and moaned, shaking as if the raft was wallowing with him in the trough of the sea. His head seemed all on fire. Sometimes he was on the raft and sometimes on the wharf. He'd hear Jensen roar out his laugh and shout at him. Words that Jensen had spoken long ago began to sprout in the heat of his head. He stood off from them, looking at them the way he used to watch the young stuff come up in the garden in early spring after a late frost. He watched kind of anxious, thinking of the words and of gardens too. Next summer by God he'd have to put in a good garden. He felt an awful fool now not to have gone with the boys to the courthouse.

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They were all going to put up a holler and see that they got jobs. They were damned if they were going to make skeletons to please anybody. He had smiled at them. "Run along, boys," he had said, "I got some ideas of my own and you fellers don't need me."

"Like hell we don't need you." And then other words like those on the walls of the hall he and Jensen used to go to floated and shoved out what the boys had said. One for All and All for One. Gosh, he was getting mixed up. His ears were ringing too bad to figure things out. It was some tornado. Look out, you're rocking the boat. His aunt's face, enlarged and bloated, swam through the dream. But he was awake. He could see the red eye of his fire through the isinglass door of the stove. The wind was chawing the door. "Don't bother about me, boys," he had said. "I got my own little trick. A little gold mine. I'll treat you all." The raft was heaving to the top of the trough now, she'd break up soon.

"The lousy bastards, they've railroaded us all to hell, but by Jesus they'll get theirs some day," and Jensen's face had slid into the water. The water had swallowed him the way it would a knife. His bones were knocking around now, deep down, against the coral reefs. The knocking was sending up big, bright, golden bubbles upon the blue sea. He should have gone with the boys. He would go yet. The boys wouldn't let him down; they'd fix that old maid. They'd hammer on the desk with their fists right under her nose. So charity ain't for dirty drunks. It's for Mister c— s— Schoop.

He sighed and his whole chest seemed tearing open, ready for the sea to rush in. Then the sea rushed in and he let the raft ride. It was riding high and dry, and Jensen was playing a mouth organ. The water all around was blue, and sprinkled with golden bubbles big as mushrooms.

Black Hussars

ILYA EHRENBOURG

IT WAS Gorgulov, the assassin of Barthou, who adopted the pseudonym, "Delirium." This was done in a moment of mental lucidity. He is not the only one. Hundreds of Gorgulovs daily utter in print their anathemas, maledictions, threats and abuse; and it does not so much as occur to anyone that all this scribbling of theirs is delirium, pure and simple. Gorgulov was merely a little more brazen and consistent in the matter, that is all.

Take the "Young Russians." They call themselves "Soviet monarchists." Then the lunatics in the next ward are heard from, and we find them publishing the *Messenger of the Czar's Bodyguards*. They maintain that Nicholas II is still alive, and sound a a call to "worry our sovereign's foes." And the metropolitan bishop, Antony, promises a remission of sins to "each and every avenger" who shall hold out against the "insane, satanic power."

The former Tolstoyan, Najivy, offers to "make away with" Maxim Gorky. The *Russian Truth* boasts of the fact that certain "little brothers" have set fire to a collective farm, and prints in a glaring headline: GREAT BEAST DESTROYED BY FLAMES. And Bayan-Kolshko finds fault with the French for lending support to the Bolsheviks.

Nekto Bostunitch blames the Waterman Pen and Kupfenberg Champagne for the reason that these firms, through their use of the pentagram trademark, are advertising the five-pointed star of Communism. Another madman, Gladky, brings an indictment against the Jews, who as he sees it have been guilty of two historic crimes: in the first place, they crucified Christ; and in the second place, thanks to "that communistic agitator, Christ," they overthrew the Roman Empire. In the gazette known as *The Sentinel,* army orders are printed: so-and-so has been appointed to such-and-such a post; so-and-so has been struck from the roster. What post or what roster is something that nobody knows. And finally, a criminal who has thrown a bomb in a Leningrad club sobs out: "I wanted to ring a bloody alarm!"

In all this there is to be made out a jumble of emotions: bloodthirstiness and anguish, megalomania and a senile debility, a hatred of humanity and the despair of those former parasites who now have nothing to do but to gad aimlessly and hopelessly about the world. This subterranean world is splendid material for the writer; yet not a single one of the émigrés has been able to bring himself to portray in all frankness this ghastly human cellar. Merejkovsky still writes of ancient Egyptian eroticism, and Bunin of the Russia of before the War, while Allanov is occupied with describing Suvorov's campaigns. The émigré poets, just as if nothing had happened, still go on singing of their dead loves and the twilight and all the old poetic stuff.

But we are wrong. The Cellar does have its poet, in the person of the ex-Hussar, Posajnoy. The latter has published two volumes of verse, *Elbrus* and *Songs of the Machines*. No émigré critic, it is true, neither Balmont nor Hodasevitch, has paid the slightest attention to either of these books, although no one has depicted better than Posajnoy the very soul, so to speak, of this underground world.

You will not find any particular ingenuity in Posajnoy's verse, for he writes "soulfully." He is not afraid of calling a spade a spade, and in his printed

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works will be found plenty of unprintable invectives. It is only with the French, mind you, that he "stands on ceremony." He loathes them, but admits that he rather fears them. He sometimes substitutes asterisks for the word "French." You never can tell, you know; the French might put him out. . . .

Posajnoy's literary tastes are simple enough. The one author he quotes is Barkov. Of Essenin, he writes:

The odor of a privy
Is a nasty one, indeed;
And so, this is a poet,
'Twould be better not to read.

Of Goomilev:

We have to give a loud "tee-hee"
At this civilian poetry.

Marina Tsvetaeva is for him a "prime numskull." Our author, on the other hand, looks upon himself as an authentic poet:

These my poems are meant to be
Read by the aristocracy.

It is with a mournful note that Posajnoy looks back on his past, especially his sprees. In such affecting moments, he beholds about him his old regimental companions and brimming bottles of wine. He tells us how, modestly imitating Caligula, he brought his stallion, Pegasus, into the officers' club:

Into the room, as if to dine,
He came and took a swig of wine,
Then gobbled a white rose bouquet
And did his dung upon a tray.
Those were no scurvy times; and, ah!
How the populace shouted a wild "Huzza!"
And thundered applause with right good will—
Oh, memories, be still! be still!

Posajnoy used to get drunk in Paris as well as Russia, in the *café chantant* known as the Moulin Rouge. He sighs lugubriously at the recollection:

'Twas all of twenty years ago,
I strolled into this hostelry,
Without a care, I'd have you know,
For I was a poet, young and free,
Scattering gold with thoughtless hand,
In all the world not one regret,
Letting my French hosts understand
That it was they who were in my debt.

On Christmas Eve, 1926, he recalls another Christmas, that of 1902:

Scorning the stuffed and festive bird,
I took my Hussar's loved cornet;
And I carried, too, upon my word,
A bouquet of flowers, the violet.
Tonight, I stare at a gloomy pot,
For I have not an extra sou;
No violets shall be my lot;
My supper a paltry cabbage-stew.

Following the rout of the White Army, Posajnoy sought service with the English. In one of his books, there is a portrait of him in the uniform of a British soldier. Disgruntedly he relates: "I proffered my sword to the English." But apparently the latter were none too pleased over this self-conferred sword, and Posajnoy pulled up stakes for Paris. Here, even more bitter experiences awaited our Hussar poet; for he finally had to go to work as a day-laborer in the Renault automobile works.

The official spokesmen for the émigrés are in the habit of saying that what they have lost is fatherland and ideals, church and native heath. Posajnoy is much more candid. He gives us a detailed inventory of the losses he has suffered:

It's goodby now to downy beds
And naps until midday;
It's goodby opera and ballet,
Goodby to old and sparkling wine;
Cornets, comrades, all must go;
For I now have to fall in line
And drill for Monsieur Renault.

The following verses are dedicated "to himself":

He who was born, born above all
For mountain, wood, the savage plains,
Born for parade-ground, glittering ball,
Must pine away in factory chains,
Must drown here in a vat of dung—
He who once spent his every day
In banquetings and at the chase
And many a pleasant warrior way—
A laborer's chores now his disgrace,
As he goes down unwept, unsung.

He hates M. Renault, calling him a "frog-catcher and penny-grabber." This does not mean, to be sure, that his hatred is of the sort that a worker might feel toward his boss. No, Posajnoy is not a worker; even in the factory, he is a Black Hussar still. If he hates Renault, it is for the reason that he, Posajnoy, is compelled to work in a factory. He recalls how the Russian nobility took in the French royalists: "Our fathers fed the famishing marquis with heaven's own milk." Whereas he has to be content with the usual "coffee and." He waxes indignant: "The French would leave a Black Hussar to starve in the Renault sewer."

Stronger and stronger grows his hatred for everybody and everything—above all, for the Jews: "It is with the Asiatic cavalry that you ought to talk to the countrymen of Moses! What, stand on ceremony with them! Well, that's too bad! Enough of pacifist palaver—stamp out the Jew louse! . . . Let Jew blood flow in a ceaseless flood!" He is not any easier on the Lettish: "I'll wipe out all your villages; I'll

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tear you limb from limb!" Nor is this fury to be attributed to "patriotic" motives; Posajnoy hates the Russians just as much. "I would I were a plague, that I might punish the Russian people!"

You villainous monster, you!
Deserving of the knout,
You lousy Russian nation,
You'll get it without a doubt.

"Nation of swine and worse, stinking in your sty!" Posajnoy assures us that in him "boils the wrath of a Niagara." But this comparison to a cataract is obviously a bit of hyperbole; for this is nothing if not the classic slaver of insanity.

One might imagine the émigré would feel grateful toward the bourgeois West. But don't forget, Posajnoy has to work in a factory! This, while others round about him are "carousing." So our Hussar curses out Europe as a "crazy old fool."

The poet grows threatening: "The time will come when you'll turn tail, you brute! . . . A Tamerlane is an angel of mercy compared to what we'll be then; our dolmans shall be red with enemy blood, and we'll broil Paris like a mushroom—that whorehouse of Europe." Our Hussar is haunted by the image of Tamerlane:

I would I were a Tamerlane;
I'd roam o'er Europe with a sword,
With blood and slaughter in my train
For those foes of ours, the English horde.
I would I had a giant's heel;
I'd trample the German in the bog;
I would show him how I feel,
For his covering Russia with a red fog.

We come now to some asterisks, for the prudent bard is turning his attention to the French: "I would give the . . . . a whack, Sink my teeth into their throats, To Devil's Island with the pack!"

Posajnoy's political convictions are determined by his universal hate. For who is there who is not to blame for the fact that a Black Hussar has to work in a factory? He criticizes Nicholas II. Why did the Czar have to take part in the Peace Conference? "What! he an Emperor, and he wanted no more war? . . . A Tolstoyan idea! The idea of a jackass!"

My blood boils at the memory:
In place of sternness to the foe,
We showed clemency.

Christ, too, comes in for his share: he was a Jew and an "upstart." "He who truly loves Russia and would see her victorious will spit on a Jewish Messiah. Hail to Mohammed the great!"

And now, it may be asked, just what are the poet's "unflinching ideals"? In moments of sorrow and despondency, he spouts curses, but in his lucid intervals he is full of hope:

The hour strikes,
The time's at hand,
When a new power
Shall take command!

His political program he formulates as follows: "Yes, what we need is a dictator-czar, a stern and terrible Emperor, such as Peter, Paul or Nicholas." In the choice of a czar, Posajnoy does not hesitate: "It is Cyril's by every right, that is clear. Hurrah for Cyril; long may he live!" He assails those monarchists who have not yet picked a monarch; and here, he displays those "fecal" manners of which he is so fond:

Out in the meadow was a stinking bit
Of very pretty looking——.
In the shadow of the feeding herd,
It was a lilac-colored turd.
"Look!" it cried, "I'm an amethyst!"
And such, without Cyril, a monarchist.

So, then, all communists and rebels, all the Jews and Lettish have already been exterminated. The dictator-czar is now enthroned, the knout is whistling, gallows are being put up for the workers, and Milyukov and Kuskova have been hunted down by way of sport—all in due course. What then? What is our exigent poet's ideal that he would realize? The answer is clear and prompt: "Do away with all the bloody Reds. They should have been sent to hell long ago. And let bottles once more foam for the old-time Cadets."

The years go by. The Emperor Cyril is enthroned at Saint-Briac. In Moscow, no bottles foam for Hussars. Machines in the factories roar. The Lettish are not dead yet. The Hussar is gripped with despair: "Forgotten are swords, cannon, ship's yards. The émigrés drag out their weary lives in Paris. And I cannot help asking my Creator: 'O Lord, why did you put us here, seeing how utterly wretched we all are?' "

The Black Hussar, poet of Pegasus and the pistol, day-laborer in the Renault plant, has a moment of bitter realization, as he adds:

Lower, lower, down I sink;
My life's strength is ebbing fast;
And as I stand upon the brink,
No friend in Paris at the last.
Unafraid of the grave, I'll take the plunge;
Upon the journey I'll embark—
But I once was strong; I'll make a lunge
And break a window in the dark.

Posajnoy talks of breaking windows; but he's no window-breaker; he's only a poet. Pavel Gorgulov was not satisfied with verses. He didn't make poems about his pistol. When he drew his revolver from his pocket, it was not for poetic purposes. He knew it would shoot and shoot straight.

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Blue with White Dots

CHARLES BRADFORD

IN THE evening everybody was tired, and nobody wanted to talk. All those cannery workers sat out in front of their cabins, company cabins, and didn't talk—just sat and looked at the ground. The kids that belonged to all those families played in the street, in the mud that came from the evening watering, fooling at making trains and lakes and rivers, playing without making any loud noises—no yelling or screaming back and forth. No fighting between these kids.

They were tired, too.

It was nice to sit in the cool of the evenings after working in the steam clouds all day long and handling sticky fruit. It was swell just to sit and enjoy the cool. It wasn't good to talk—better to sit quiet—no good to think, only good to sit quiet in the cool and not talk and not think. Sit and enjoy the evening, and enjoying the evening more because of the exhaustion from the steam clouds in the cannery building and handling the sticky, fuzzy fruit at a hundred miles an hour all day long, moving hands and arms like lightning—pit in the box, peach on the belt, pull a peach from the box and spoon it all around the middle, cut it all around the middle—pit in the box, peach on the belt, all day long as fast as possible with the steam clouds rolling overhead—that's what made it good to be able to sit in the cool of the evening without talking and without thinking, only knowing the exhaustion and the worry of how to eat after the fruit was gone.

Mary Piper was carrying a bastard baby. It kicked her belly, and she felt it and put her hands on her belly. Her ma, who had carried half-a-dozen in her time, sat on the top step by Mary. Her pa, who had a creased and dirty neck, a whiskered face and a tobacco-juice complexion, was below her, one step. Norma, kid sister, sat by Pa. Sarah-Jane was playing in the mud.

"She better do them dishes," said Pa.

"Sarah-Jane," screeched the old lady. "You come here to me!"

Mary and Norma moved when the old lady screeched. It was like they *had* to move when the old lady screeched. The old lady had been screeching for a long, long time.

The kid got up out of the mud and came running. She dodged a baby with a muddy diaper that was crying in the street. She came running, with her knees knocking together and her red hair straggling. She came running, leaning forward so her little breasts wouldn't joggle and hurt.

"What, ma?" said Sarah-Jane.

"Git in there and do them dishes. All you do is play. How many times do I have to tell you, you got to do them dishes. All you do is play."

"All right, ma."

She walked up the steps, passed the old man, and he couldn't resist giving her a little shove. She stumbled and fell into Mary and poked her elbow into Mary's belly.

"Ouch!" said Mary. "Ouch—my God!"

"Lookit you!" screeched the old lady. "Oh, my!"

Sarah-Jane scrambled out of their way and went inside. After that came the rattling of the dishes from inside.

"It's nice when they water," said the old lady.

Nobody answered.

"Ho-hum," said the old man and stretched.

Mary thought, "My God—I got a baby now, and what am I going to do with a baby and no dad for the baby. When this fruit's gone, then I'll have this baby, and what can anybody do with a baby with no money to have it with? Maybe I ought to do something—everybody does something when they get a baby. Maybe I waited too long. Maybe I waited too long to do anything to keep from having a baby. Maybe it 'll be a good thing for me to have this baby. If I do have this baby, I'll beat it to town and never let anybody know where I beat it to. A girl can make a living in town. I'll go to Los, and I'll have this baby down there. I think a girl can make a living in Los. I ain't afraid to go to Los. Maybe it'll be better to make my living in Los and not cut any more fruit and not pick any more of that cotton and not work in the olives any more. I think I could go to Los and make a living there and buy me some good clothes and have this baby. I can save up some money. . . ."

Mary thought again, "Maybe I ought to do something about having this baby—maybe if I'd hit myself good and hard in the belly. . . ."

Norma got up and started down the street. Norma's hips were nice hips, and she made them jump when she walked. Norma and Mary practiced that for a long time. Mary didn't practice any more. But before Mary got a baby, she could do it better than Norma.

Norma went down the street, but not very far—she walked slow and jumped her backsides each time she took a step. But she didn't get very far, because the old man called her back.

"Norma!"

That was all the old man said. Norma turned around slow and came walking back with a sulk in her step and sat down.

Mary thought, "If I could get in a *house* some

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place in Los after I borned this baby—I wouldn't be afraid of getting in a *house* some place. Maybe I could get enough money to buy some clothes or something. I'd rather be in a *house* some place that was nice than. . . ."

The baby kicked her again. She held her hands over her belly. She didn't want to do any more starving to death. She didn't want to be tired like this any more. She could go to Los Angeles and be a whore, and that would be better than starving to death and being tired. Whores always had good clothes and nice clean hands, and they went on vacations, on boat trips, and met nice rich men, and never told the men that they had anything to do with being a girl in a house; and sometimes they could marry some rich man and never let him know anything about being anything.

Mary took her hands off her belly and rolled a cigarette, and when she licked the paper she saw a man coming, walking in the mud, down the street toward them.

Mary's baby did a flip inside her, and she felt cold and suddenly scared to death.

The man was just like her pa, only he was smaller, but he had whiskers and tobacco complexion, and he looked like he was from Arkansas.

"Well, say!" said the old man. "Hi, there!"

"Hi," said the man, stepping in the mud.

The women didn't say *anything*.

"Well," said the old man, "Well, now, John. Where you been, John?"

"Imperial," said John.

"Well, now," said the old man. "Well, now."

The women didn't say anything.

"Well, now," said the old man, looking around at the women.

"Good even', Mary," said John.

"Stand up, Mary," said the old man. "Show John."

Mary stood up, then sat right down again.

"Well, now," said John.

The old man giggled. Then the old man said, "What you been doin' in the valley, John, boy?"

John was still looking at Mary's belly. He said, without looking at the old man, "Oh, one thing and another. Pickin' a little cotton—playin' a little poker."

"Well," said the old man.

"Won a little money," said John, looking away from Mary's belly. "How you folks been doin'?"

"We git another week here," said the old man. "We got two weeks already."

"Where you goin' then?"

"God A'mighty, I don't know," said the old man. "Where you goin'?"

"Well—I won a little money. I don't know just where I'm goin'."

"We need a little money," said the old man, looking at Mary.

"Sure," said John. "Everybody needs a little money." He didn't look at Mary when he said this.

"Well," said the old man. "Well, sir." He rocked back and forth on the step. Then, "Why don't you sit down, John, boy? What you standin' for? Sit down by Norma there—ain't she growed? My!"

John looked down at Norma and waited for her to move. She didn't move.

"Can I sit by you, Norma?" said John.

"Move over there, Norma, and let John sit by you— sit by her, John. You won't bite old John, will you, honey?"

Norma moved over, moving like a mechanical doll.

"My, you're gettin' big," said John.

"She's pretty, ain't she, John?" said the old man. "All she eats is beans and biscuits—I don't know how she gets so pretty."

"Right pretty," said John.

The old man moved restlessly on the step.

Suddenly the old lady got up and went inside and slammed the door.

"Ha," said the old man. "Ha! what's the matter with that woman?"

Inside the rattling dishes rattled faster.

"Yes, sir! *Right* pretty," said John.

Norma didn't move. Her neck was erect and stiff, and she didn't move her head.

The old man kept moving restlessly on the step. He kept spitting into the street.

"I'd like to have a pretty girl to go to a show or somethin' with me," said John.

Norma turned her eyes toward John, not looking at John but past the side of his face.

"No," said Norma.

"Now, Norma," said the old man.

"No," said Norma.

"Maybe a pretty girl would like to have a new dress," said John.

Norma turned her head, running her fixed eyes past John's face, turning her head around on her shoulders like an owl. She looked at Mary, but Mary sat with her hands on her belly and looked at the toes of her shoes. Mary did not look up from the toes of her shoes. Norma turned back, turning her head like an owl, with her eyes wide open.

"A blue one?" said John.

"Sure—sure, a blue one," said the old man.

"Like the one I gave Mary?" said John.

The old man giggled. "Sure—sure. Just like that one, honey."

Mary got up and went inside and sat down on the bed where she and Sarah-Jane and Norma slept. The old lady and the old man slept in the other bed on the other side of the stove. Sarah-Jane had finished with the dishes and was playing with some postcards. The old lady was sitting on the bed, talking to herself and jerking her head from side to side.

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"Norma!" said the old man. "Listen to what John's sayin' to you there!"

"Bran' new," said John.

"See there," said the old man.

John got up and took Norma's arm, and she stood up suddenly, jerking her body from the step.

"Well," said John to the old man, still holding Norma's arm, "we'll get on now and go down town and pick out that new dress in the windows."

The old man moved back and forth, sliding on the step. He took his hat off and put it back on again. He clapped his hands together and spat into the street.

"Well," said John, "we'll be seein' you."

"Ah—hey!" said the old man, standing up.

John stopped, and still holding Norma's arm reached into his pocket and drew out a dollar bill.

"You want to borrow that?" said John.

"Yes, sir," said the old man.

"So long," said John.

He steered Norma down the street through the mud. They walked around some kids that were building a mud cannery. John stepped on the drying shed, and one of the kids set up a howl, but John didn't pay any attention. He kept on steering Norma down the street.

All Quiet on the Literary Front

ALAN CALMER

BACK IN 1930, when Mike Gold mowed down Thornton Wilder in the pages of the *New Republic,* he sounded the first shot in the literary battle of the decade. Almost at once the front-line critics of the right and the left trained their artillery at each other. In two or three years the bombardment became so heavy it was hard to find a single magazine that did not take a crack at revolutionary criticism and proletarian literature. The anti-Marxians directed a steady fire at the "artists in uniform," while the pro-Marxians countered with a fusillade at the "critics in mufti."

To continue these military analogies, so popular in early Marxist criticism, most of the shooting went wild. The *antis* succeeded only in throwing duds at their opponents; the *pros* usually caught these explosives and tossed them back.

This was apparent in the endless give-and-take over the question of the social value of literature, with one side crying in the night, "Propaganda is not art," and the other side echoing back, "Art is propaganda."

After a few more years the cannonade died down. Most of the critics got tired of firing at false targets and unseen enemies. Except for a few scattered but notable hits, the gun-play was reduced to occasional sniping. As one critic recently put it, a truce of boredom was established, although none of the basic issues had been settled; both sides simply got tired of arguing so persistently at cross purposes.

During the last few months, however, there have been signs of a resumption of hostilities. Apparently, a second offensive is under way, for a new general staff of critics have moved up from the second-line trenches to bombard the Marxian literary front.

This new offensive comes at a time when the verbal fog around proletarian literature has cleared up a little. It comes at a time when the Marxian ranks are being rid of a certain amount of dogmatism and intolerance; when some authors have fled from no-man's-land or have deserted the enemy to join the proletarians; when the shifting of political scenes has compelled writers to overlook the various shadings in their beliefs and unite against extreme reaction; when, as a result of a lot of unorganized discussion, most of the Marxist critics do finally agree about at least some of the basic principles of their viewpoint, and when several sharp tendencies are beginning to express themselves within Marxian criticism.

In spite of all this, the new drive against Marxism seems to be headed in the same direction as the first offensive, aiming at the same false targets, firing in the same aimless fashion, shooting high and wide of the bull's-eye of the proletarian approach to literature. On several sectors of the literary front—chiefly in the quality and weekly review press—a number of literary ladies and gents, including Mary Colum, Mary McCarthy, Bernard de Voto, Ernest Boyd, Albert Guerard, *et al,* have recently raised the same old ghosts and taken pot-shots at the same old bogeys that their more intelligent predecessors slew years ago.

It seems to me that by this time readers and writers must be thoroughly indignant at the endless repetition of these same attacks. As long as these old questions have to be answered over and over again, Marxian criticism is likely to go round and round without getting anywhere.

For the sake of those on both sides who want to see a clean fight, something drastic ought to be done about this situation. At the present time, while there is a lull in hostilities, why can't we draw up some kind of treaty or a series of articles of war, defining the most elementary limits of the Marxian position, and demanding, under the threat of severe literary penalities, that these rules be strictly observed—in

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defense of or attack upon proletarian writing? Of course, not very much can be accomplished by this method, since the Marxian ranks are far from representing a homogeneous front; but among the more or less recognized left-wing critics— even among the most uncompromising and strait-laced of them—there is at least a theoretical, a verbal, acceptance of some of these fundamentals.

Accordingly, the following is submitted as a draft resolution of such principles, which are to be accepted by all *pros* and *antis* preliminary to all discussions of Marxian literature and criticism. (It is based upon objections recently raised by the writers mentioned above, and upon answers abstracted largely from Hicks' "Literature and Revolution," Freeman's introduction to *Proletarian Literature,* Phillips' and Rahv's editorials in *Partisan Review,* and Edwin Seaver's article, "Caesar or Nothing.")

1. Whereas the term propaganda as it is generally used in this country connotes high-pressure advertising and general misrepresentation of truth; and whereas, when the word "propagandistic" is used to mean that all writing reflects its author's outlook on life, it is too all-inclusive a definition to be useful; and whereas further, Marxians do not condone writing in which a political "message" is *grafted* upon a literary work—

Be it resolved that henceforth the term propaganda shall be dropped from all literary discussions; and that the problem involved shall be dealt with in terms of the relation between the artist's attitude toward the world and his creative product—terms which have a reputable usage in literary criticism.

2. Whereas the slogan, art is a weapon, is ordinarily conceived of in a vulgar utilitarian manner; and whereas the effects of literature are not ordinarily the same as the effects of a direct appeal to action like a newspaper editorial or a soapbox speech—

Be it resolved that henceforth all critics shall not identify proletarian literature with political agitation, but shall differentiate between the uses of literature and those of other social instruments.

3. Whereas revolutionary fiction and poetry are constantly criticized in the revolutionary press (and especially since we have just witnessed the spectacle of a revolutionary author slaying a new proletarian novel as decisively as a bourgeois critic praised the same book); and whereas further, no party decree can produce art, nor a party card endow a communist with artistic genius—

Be it resolved that henceforth all *antis* shall refrain from accusing Marxian critics of applauding proletarian novels simply because they are proletarian and of berating bourgeois works because they are bourgeois—and that all would-be Marxian critics shall refrain from using such criteria.

4. Whereas proletarian literature is not a sect, a theology, etc., nor even the expression of a single school or type of writing but the literature of an entire social class containing numerous groupings and tendencies; and whereas there is no official party line in literature, and numerous disagreements do exist among recognized Marxian authors—

Be it resolved that when attacking the Marxian point of view, critics shall not pick out a single article by a single writer, treating it as an official statement of the Marxian position and attributing its weaknesses to all proletarian criticism; and that in judging a revolutionary book, they shall consider it not as an official pronunciamento of a party but as a volume reflecting the personal taste and opinion of its author or editor.

5. Whereas critics define proletarian literature as *by* or *about* workers, although Marxians point out that it is the present outlook of the author and not his subject-matter, characters or class origin which determines whether his work is proletarian or not—

Be it resolved that in future discussions proletarian writing shall be treated as a broad term for a whole class literature, in the way *bourgeois* is used as a broad term for a class literature.

6. Whereas proletarian literature does not seek to delimit the scope of art but to extend its boundaries, opening new areas of experience to the writer—

Be it resolved that conceptions of the narrowing influence of communism on writing shall be at least thoroughly aired before being accepted.

7. Whereas proletarian literature is not something new springing out of the heavens, but a continuation of past literature, just as Marxism is a continuation of past culture—

Be it resolved that all future discussions of proletarian writing shall recognize that it is not a negation of past literature but its legitimate heir.

8. Whereas critics continue to maintain that Marxist literary criticism is a sociology, and whereas it is not a sociology but a literary criticism—

Be it resolved that henceforth it shall be considered a literary criticism with the full tasks of interpretation and evaluation.

The above is fearfully submitted, with the hope that it will provoke a sufficient number of amendments and substitute motions to dispose of these issues once and for all.

But even if a final draft is approved, the work of the individual critic will just be ready to begin. For it is, of course, in practice, in the everyday tasks of explaining and evaluating specific literary pieces, problems and tendencies, that the writer will prove the right of Marxism to be literary criticism and his right to be a Marxian critic. Unfortunately, many of the recognized Marxian critics—Hicks, in particular—have failed so far to fulfill these aims. Maybe if they didn't have to stop to answer elementary questions every time a new writer or reader enters the battlefield, but could take these questions for granted, they could really apply themselves to the critical work that has to be done.

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A Little Anthology

"Dover Beach"

—A Note to that Poem

The wave withdrawing
Withers with seaward rustle of flimsy water
Sucking the sand down: dragging at empty shells:
The roil after it settling: too smooth: smothered—

After forty a man's a fool to wait in the
Sea's face for the full force and the roaring of
Surf to come over him: droves of careening water.
After forty the tug's out and the salt and the
Sea follow it: less sound and violence:
Nevertheless the ebb has its own beauty—
Shells sand and all and the whispering rustle.
There's earth in it then and the bubbles of foam gone.

Moreover—and this too has its lovely uses—
It's the outward wave that spills the inward forward
Tripping the proud piled mute virginal
Mountain of water in wallowing welter of light and
Sound enough—thunder for miles back: it's a fine and a
Wild smother to vanish in: pulling down—
Tripping with outward ebb the urgent inward.

Speaking alone for myself it's the steep hill and the
Toppling lift of the young men I am toward now—
Waiting for that as the wave for the next wave.
Let them go over us all I say with the thunder of
What's to be next in the world. It's we will be under it!

ARCHIBALD MacLEISH

Never, Never, Never

But it never could be,
how could it ever happen if it never did before and it's not so now,
But suppose that the face behind those steel prison bars,
why do you dream about a face lying cold in the trenches streaked with rain and dirt and blood,
is it the very same face seen so often in the mirror,
just as though it could be true—
But what if it is, what if it is, what if it is, what if the thing that cannot happen really happens just the same,
suppose the fever goes a hundred, then a hundred and one,
what if Holy Savings Trust goes from 98 to 88 to 78 to 68, then drops down to 28 and 8 and out of sight,
and the fever shoots a hundred two, a hundred three, a hundred four, then a hundred five and out,
But now there's only the wind and the sky and sunlight and the clouds,
with ordinary people walking and talking as they always have before along the ordinary street
doing everyday things with everyday faces and everyday clothes in the ordinary way,
just as they always will—
Then why does it feel like a bomb, why does it feel like a target,
like standing on the gallows with the trap about to drop,
why does it feel like a thunderbolt the second before it strikes, why does it feel like a tightrope walk high over hell,
Because it is not, never will, could not come true
that the whole wide, bright, green, warm, calm world goes
CRASH CRASH CRASH CRASH CRASH CRASH CRASH.

KENNETH FEARING

More of a Corpse than a Woman

Give them my regards when you go to the school reunion;
and at the marriage-supper, say that I'm thinking about them.
They'll remember my name; I went to the movies with that one,
feeling the weight of their death where she sat at my elbow;
she never said a word
but all of them were heard.

All of them alike, expensive girls, the leaden friends:
one used to play the piano, one of them once wrote a sonnet,
one even seemed awakened enough to photograph wheat-fields—
the dull girls with the educated minds and technical passions—
pure love was their employment,
they tried it for enjoyment.

Meet them at the boat: they've brought the souvenirs of boredom,
a seashell from the faltering monarchy;
the nose of a marble saint; and from the battlefield,
an empty shell divulged from a flower-bed.
The lady's wealthy breath
perfumes the air with death.

The leaden lady faces the fine, voluptuous woman,
faces a rising world bringing its gifts in its hands.
Kisses her casual dreams upon the lips she kisses,
risen, she moves away; takes others; moves away.
inadequate to love,
supposes she's enough.

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Give my regards to the well-protected woman,
I knew the ice-cream girl, we went to school together.
There's something to bury, people, when you begin to bury.
When your women are ready and rich in their wish for
the world,
destroy the leaden heart,
we've a new race to start.

MURIEL RUKEYSER

Speak to Me of Mussolini!

". . . . the feet alone are to be
11 meters long . . . ."

"Excellency,"
the simpering reporter says,
"what homage would you have
posterity pay you?"

Excellency screws up
His Excellency's mug
Zitto!
His Excellency is about to speak
An oracle! an oracle!
a purge for Pythia
an enema for the Sibyl
and a dose of salts for the Sphinx
His Excellency is speaking now

"Let lovers choose my statue
as their trysting place
let young couples say
'Tonight with Mussolini' "

They are building a statue to Mussolini
the young Fascist balillas
that is to say
Mussolini
is building a statue to Mussolini
out of the lire and centesimi
chipped from the young balillas
a statue of bronze old Vatican Peter
big toe kissed away by the fervent lips
of Chicago aldermen
shall have nothing on Il Duce
a statue
66 meters tall
the tallest in the world
the biggest in the world
they are propping the slopes of Monte Mario
with reinforced concrete
to hold Benito's weight

Where now is the glory that *was* Rome?
the Seven Hills
that piker Trajan and the Via Appia?
Mussolini
is 66 meters tall!
bronze athlete (?) in a lion's skin
right hand raised in the Fascist salute— *Avanti!*
face 7 meters from forehead to chin
and the feet 11 meters

Si, cara mia, meet me tonight
under Mussolini's hoof

The babbo and the mamma they met there
true they're not here now
the babbo died in Ethiopia
the mamma starved at home
but they always came together
under the shadow of the Duce's heel
that shadow lay upon them and between them—
Oh, *parlez-moi d'amour!*—as they slaved at love
to man more tanks and planes—Giovinezza!
youth always at his feet

Si, si, carissimo, I'll meet you there
"Tonight with Mussolini!"

SAMUEL PUTNAM

Of Thee

What do we know of this country, where is its heart,
what does that heart say—
Snowed-in, deep under white piles of Sunday newspapers
higher than the Great Divide;
Focussed down to a pinpoint, hundreds of miles behind
the other side of the movie screen?

Shall we again converse with the professors, or talk
with the Bureau of Standards?
Should we bore deep inside the monumental mansions,
deep to their plush cores?
What can the City Editors tell us, what can they say
which they have never said before?
What will politicians and torch-singers promise, which
they have not promised before?

Look long along the eyes of transcontinental rain, and
the rays of the sun and moonbeam—
Roofs, trees, smoking chimneys, cities at the crossroads,
houses out in the countryside;
Growing fields, brambles, deserts and rolling hillside,
snow-birch, cactus, alder and elm:

What is there in the heart of this nation and country
which has not been in any other,
Which has never been in the heart of any man, nation,
people, race and century?

JAMES NEUGASS

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Stopover

NATHAN ASCH

I SAT in the Salt Lake bus station and waited for the time to leave and cursed myself for ever having started. Never in my life again I wanted to see another bus, or to ride upon its shaking, clumsy seats and feel my insides rattle; and if the way back on the road I had come had been much shorter than the road before me, I would have damned the trip and gone home to New York. But I was at the end of the journey, almost on the Coast, and if I went ahead I would at least see something distractingly new in each place I came to.

I became aware that someone sat in the waiting room seat beside me and stared at me, but I kept my face rigid. Then a voice asked me, "Is the bus going to San Francisco?"

I said, "I think so."

"Are you going to San Francisco?"

I nodded.

The voice said, "That's just fine, because I'm going too, and we can go together."

I turned. It was a girl, and I didn't like her looks.

She said, "I just hate to travel with strangers, don't you?"

I looked at her and I hated *her.*

She said, "We can sit together all night, and get nice and comfy."

I got up and said, "Pardon me," and took my bag and went to the news stand. I waited while the bus was announced and saw her stare at me and then walk toward the bus. I waited till the crowd got on, and at the last moment I also got on. There was only one seat empty, and it was the seat next to the girl.

She said, "I saved it for you."

I slid into the seat, pushed myself just as far away from her as I could—about two inches—and turned my head to the aisle. I had a sudden interest in life, because I was determined, if it killed me, to spend the whole night without once looking or talking to the girl. There was a man across the aisle from me, and I began talking to him about whisky. We compared notes about all the whisky we had drunk; then the driver got on and put out the lights, and we started. The man and I talked a little while longer, but then he pushed his hat over his eyes and fell asleep. I sat rigid in the seat.

The girl behind me moved closer and whispered, "I've got some whisky, too. Would you like some?"

I turned. I said, "Yes, I would."

She fumbled for a bottle, passed it to me. She said she didn't drink. I poured some whisky down my throat.

She said, "My name's Marcheta."

She hadn't looked Mexican at all, and she didn't speak with a Spanish accent.

"Oh, I'm not Mexican," she said. "I'm Mormon. My folks have a ranch in Wyoming."

She told me four different stories about herself. The first, she had a job in Cheyenne, and she had saved some money and was going to see the Pacific Coast. The second, she was running away from home because her stepfather had abused her. The third, as she became confidential, she was running away from her husband. The fourth, she had shot her husband. Later I discovered that all four stories were true, only not in the way she had told them. And she had not shot her husband, she had shot herself trying to shoot her husband.

Some of the stories she told me of what had happened to her were incredible. But she wasn't lying. I was with her a week, she talked all the time, and often she put her facts in the wrong places, but everything she said was true. And she was a strange combination of humility and boldness. When she was telling me stories of her past, when she said, "Yes, the son of a bitch, I pulled the trigger straight into his guts," there was a triumph in her voice, but when I told her, Please, to stop shouting obscenities on San Francisco streets—she became so excited talking of her husband—she was so ashamed she wept.

All that week, on the road, in Reno, on the road again, and later in San Francisco, I never knew what she would think of next. And I never knew what to think of her; sometimes I believed that she did nothing but lie and told her so, and then she showed me her left breast with a scar on each side where the bullet had gone in and gone out again. And then I told her she had left no husband, and the next day a letter came from him with money in it, begging her for pity's sake to come back.

She said, "When I come back it will be dead, to haunt him."

But that first night in the bus she was just a crazy and not very attractive person who had attached herself to me. And after I had found I could not ignore her, I made the best of it by talking to her. And when she had heard I was stopping off in Reno, she said she would stop off too. Oh, yes, she had all of her life wanted to see Reno.

The bus continued pitching, rolling, tossing; and soon broke even her ardent temperament, and she kept quiet and then fell asleep. I also fell asleep; and woke in the early morning with her head on my shoulder, and the Nevada desert outside of the window.

We stopped off for breakfast, and somebody said something about my *missus;* then we rolled on through nothing but bare earth and rocks and sunlight, and Marcheta fell asleep again, and at noon we arrived in Reno.

In Reno I also went mad, but it must have been

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under Marcheta's influence. There was nothing particularly I wanted to see in Reno; there was nothing about the place that I knew except that rich people could get divorces there. But the dullness of the everlasting desert and the vibration of the bus and the fact that I spent most of my nights on the bus and was very tired made it impossible for me to ride for an extended time without stopping off and stretching. I had intended to walk for a few hours around Reno, to enter a saloon, perhaps to watch some gambling and that evening to go on.

But when we entered a gambling house and there before us saw the playing tables covered with green cloth, surrounded by intent people, heard the dealers' voices, heard the click made by the roulette wheels, the soft fall of dice thrown against a board, Marcheta became very excited. She stood looking intently around the room, and then she went up to the oldest dealer and said to him, "Do you know Harvey Pierce?"

The dealer asked, "Who's Harvey Pierce?"

"He's my brother. He ran away from home."

The dealer was angry. "How do you expect to find him in Reno?"

Marcheta said, "You don't have to get sore. I just thought he might be here."

Nothing made sense. Marcheta took money out of her bag and began playing blackjack; she began winning. I walked away from her and to a crap table and began throwing dice. When I walked away from the table, I had perhaps three dollars left in my pocket. I joined Marcheta just as she was leaving her table. She said, "I lost every cent I had."

We walked out of the gambling house and into a drug store and we each drank a glass of milk. Marcheta said, "Well, we've got our tickets, and we can live together in San Francisco."

I said, "I'm not going to live with you."

She said, "Oh, I'll wire my husband for money."

"I'm wiring for money, too, to New York," I said. "But still I'm not going to live with you."

We went to the telegraph station, and then in the bus depot we waited five hours for the next bus.

II

Before the bus left Reno we heard that on Donner Summit it was snowing hard; and later when the driver had shifted into low and begun twisting and straining up the last mountain before California, it began to rain. It changed into snow; it became thicker snow, beating, as I have never seen before, directly into the windshield, like blinding rays of light. The driver must have felt his way up that road, because nothing could be seen beyond the soap-sud-covered glass, and as in a ship blinded by the fog, he constantly tooted on his horn. From somewhere else came an answering toot; the driver stopped; rolled down his side window and we saw the hazy outline of an east-bound bus, and heard its driver's voice:

"There's been a snow slide on Donner Summit. How's the road ahead?"

Our driver said it was passable; rolled up his window; both busses "so long-ed" each other with a toot; and we continued climbing.

Everyone was nervous, except Marcheta. She was asleep and slept all through that night; but everybody else talked to everybody else, and some became indignant. A man demanded that we turn that huge bus around in the narrow mountain road and return to Reno. Somebody insisted that we stop and wait. The driver said, "There's rocks coming down on all sides; if we don't get through we're likely to get crushed."

We passed the fall of snow, and through the windshield we could see the road again. It was clear in places, and then we would come to a pile of snow and had to steer around it close to the sheer fall on the other side. Or we came to a rock in the middle of the road, and we watched the driver stop, get out, push the rock over to the side; and again we started. A baby was whimpering and murmuring, "Mama, mama," endlessly.

A man and I volunteered to save time by walking ahead of the bus and to push rocks out of the way. Some of them were so unwieldy and heavy the driver had to help us. And outside it was cold, and the rocks were newly broken and sharp and wouldn't push away, and except in the line of the bus's headlights, everywhere was darkness. We heard rocks rolling down the mountain, and then with a thud stopping somewhere. And it gave an eerie feeling to find around a bend a huge boulder crushed by the impact into smaller pieces, and to think the bus might have been under it.

It took hours to get through to a clearer road; we were soaked when we got back inside, and our hands were raw. And again it snowed and it rained. It was a wild night. We stopped for some coffee at a rest station, and there was a man staggering up and down the place and shouting, "I'm as drunk as a hoot owl."

"Wait till your wife finds out."

"My wife went to Reno in her car, to a picture show; and I hope she met a lot of rocks on the way back."

Again in the bus, most people were asleep. I sat beside Marcheta, who was sound asleep, and watched in the slow coming of the dawn the outside take on shape. We were in California, and slowly rolling down, and the darkness had become a pine forest; then as the sun rose somewhere back of the mountains, it was a clear day, and the woods suddenly turned green, and the earth turned red. There were trees with leaves, there were hills rolling with a beautiful green through red, there were flowers; there were sheep grazing on real grass. After the

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dust and desert, we had come into a lush, lovely, smiling, yellow-green-red valley. I woke up Marcheta. I said, "Look."

She looked, and then she threw both arms around me tightly and her head on my shoulders, and she again fell asleep. Half-strangled, I stared around me, and I could have sung with joy.

We detoured to Sacramento because there was a flood; we ate breakfast there and then walked up and down L Street and saw hundreds of unemployed men leaning in doorways or standing hopelessly in the street; we drove on towards San Francisco, got to the ferry, crossed on it. I was giddy with fatigue. We arrived at the terminal, got out of the bus. I went to a hotel, Marcheta behind me; I got in the elevator, she was also there. I entered the room, I pulled down the shades and I fell on the bed.

III

I woke up drunk with twenty hours of sleep, and I was in an empty room. There was a strange suitcase open on the dresser, and a woman's clothes all over the place. A nightgown lay at the foot of the bed. I could smell some sort of toilet water.

I lit a cigarette and I lay back. I called the telegraph company and no money had come. I ordered coffee. Then Marcheta came in.

I asked, "Where have you been?"

"Out looking for a job," she said.

"Did you sleep here last night?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, how did you sleep?"

"Just dandy," she said.

She removed her coat and her hat, and looked in my bag and took my shirts and examined the buttons. She found some buttons missing; it took her a long time to get the thread into the eye of the needle; and then she began sewing. She said, "I was down to the telegraph company, but my money hasn't come."

I stared at her. I asked her, "What are we—married?"

She didn't say anything, but when she got through sewing, she went into the bathroom and drew a bath for me. I said to myself, "Oh, well," and I went into the bathroom.

We walked on Mission Street and looked into the shop windows, and she showed me the dresses that she liked. She didn't act like a hick in a big city. She wasn't afraid of traffic, she didn't look up at the tall buildings. We walked toward Chinatown, and in the narrow, balcony-lined streets, I was much more interested in the strange sights than she was.

We went to a dime picture show, and then back to the hotel, and we ordered sandwiches sent up. And in the morning still no money had come. And the telegraph company would not accept a message sent collect asking for money. And now there was only change in my pockets.

Marcheta said, "We're going to get out of this hotel. You've got a watch, haven't you?"

I said, "Yes."

"I've got a watch, too."

We went to a pawn shop, and we got twenty dollars. Then we started room-hunting on Sixth and Seventh Street. We saw signs, *Housekeeping Rooms For Rent,* and climbed stairs and talked to landladies and looked at rooms. In one place the tenant had not yet been thrown out, and she hid in a closet while the landlady showed us through the room and told us how comfortable it was; while we stared at the empty milk bottle and the empty box of crackers, and the landlady warned us that there was only one thing she was strict about, rent. And if no rent was coming, out you go, and I could see the woman in the wrapper through the half-opened closet door. We saw rooms in which there was absolutely no light; an electric bulb had to be kept burning, illuminating the broken bed and the food-stained, unpainted table, and the one-burner gas plate. In each place we came to there was a different smell, but always rotten-sweet, and the landladies were sweaty-looking, fat, or seemed as if they had just gotten out of bed, and even their hair was uncombed and wild.

Finally in one house where the landlady was out, the maid showed us a room that could possibly be lived in. We took it, left a deposit, went back to our hotel, checked out and came back with our clothes. The landlady met us, told us we could not have that room. I didn't look as if I had a job and could afford to pay five dollars a week; so she was really doing us a kindness by giving us a smaller place at two-fifty a week. She led us to this room with a three-legged bed—the fourth leg was a box—with a torn, oil-cloth laid table, with the spilled-over and burnt gas plate, and the coffee pot that had a hole in it. I couldn't argue. I said we'd take the room.

Marcheta didn't seem to mind. She asked me to pull open the dresser, and she laid her clothes in it. She went downstairs and came back, her arms filled with groceries, and behind her came the grocer's boy with a filled box. She bought enough food to last us for weeks. She was not an experienced cook.

And I might have considered all this an adventure, if she would also have thought it a lark. But she didn't. She took it for granted. She hadn't liked the hotel we had been in. But she liked this room. It was her home. And she washed dishes in it, and she washed my shirts—I hadn't asked her to wash my shirts—and she borrowed an iron from a neighbor and pressed the shirts. And she hummed. All the time she hummed the song *Marcheta.*

It was the worst house I was ever in. All night long people talked through the walls. There were fights. Downtairs there was a terrible knocking on the door, and the landlady opened the door and screamed, "I'm going to call a cop."

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And a man's voice yelled, "Call a cop. You've got no injunction to keep me out of the house."

The landlady compained, "Not even a thank you for opening the door."

"Thank you?" he shouted. "Did I ever get thanks for unlocking doors, for putting drunks out . . . "

In the morning, still no money had come, and I began shouting at Marcheta, just as the other people were shouting; and she wept. We had left our door slightly open, and then it was opened wide, and there stood the neighbor, and she wanted her iron. She looked at me with contempt, and she said to Marcheta, "Don't let that loafer beat you."

If I had had something in my hand I would have thrown it at her. I walked out of the room and into the streets. Here I was, married in San Francisco, and living in an awful room; quarreling, and I didn't even have a job. And I knew I couldn't get relief; I hadn't been long enough in town. I took the bus ticket out of my pocket; but it was almost useless. I would never get out.

I went back to the house, and there was Marcheta smiling through her tears, and she had dinner ready, the not very good dinner that she cooked. And she was very tender, told me stories about her childhood on the ranch, about the cattle and the dust storms each spring; and then she told me of the terrible things her step-father had done to her, how her mother had known, but she had been so much in love with him, she had done nothing about it. How she had run away and gotten a job in the flour factory in Cheyenne, and how she had met her husband, a bookkeeper in the factory, and how she had married him, the only man there who did not try to seduce her. There was a very good reason for his not having tried; and there she had lived, getting food together for him every night and lying in bed next to him, "this cold hunk of meat, and he couldn't do anything about it, and he was mortally scared somebody else would get it and watched me like a hawk. And once he got his courage together and he wasn't even drunk, just so sober he was crazy," and she was so afraid of him that she got a gun and told him she'd kill him if he tried to touch her. They wrestled, and she pulled the trigger and she shot herself through the breast.

It was night, and I couldn't see her when I asked her what she proposed doing. She didn't answer me. She crouched near the wall and didn't move all night.

In the morning, the nightmare passed; money came for me, and the husband sent her fare to come back to Cheyenne.

She would not go back. She was going to stay in San Francisco and get a job. She packed my bag and walked with me to Mission Street, and we shook hands, and we said goodby.

I stayed a few more days in San Francisco. I had a letter to the friend of a New York friend, and he took me riding through the lovely town. I went to a party on Telegraph Hill, and almost everyone lived on relief. I rode up and down the hills in the cable cars. I ate a sea-food dinner on the wharf. I walked down to the Embarcadero and went to the office of the longshoremen's union, and they were talking about a strike. But when I went to the Post Office for mail, I was afraid I would meet Marcheta; and on the street often some woman's back would seem familiar, and I would turn on my heels and go back. San Francisco was haunted by the ghost of Marcheta. She was there some place, looking for a job, thinking of her husband and screaming she would kill him. All the time I thought of her, and I was certain that if I stayed on, I would some evening go back to that house and up the stairs through the smelly hall, go back to the room, and maybe stay there.

One evening I took a north-bound bus, and two days later I was in Seattle.

The 27th of September

ANDRÉ GIDE

[*It was at the suggestion of Maxim Gorky that writers in countries all over the world were asked to describe how they had spent the day of September 27th last. The day was chosen quite without forethought, the writers being requested to make note of some event or, bearing the date in mind, to shape as they might see fit their contribution to the piece of collective writing to be entitled* A DAY ROUND THE WORLD. *Following is the text which André Gide sent to Gorky.*]

TWO friends, in the morning, came in to have breakfast with me. One of them, a Belgian miner of Le Borinage, had been delegated to make certain investigations in our northern districts and was planning to leave that very night; he wished to consult me on certain points. The other was my traveling companion of the Congo.

"This day," I informed them, "Friday, the 27th, is a special one, in that I am supposed to give an exact account of it and set down everything that I see and hear during the course of the day."

"Well," exclaimed my Congo friend, "if that's the case, I'm going to leave you right here and now!" And he lost no time in doing so.

Events on this day treated me in much the same fashion as had my friend. As it happened, having

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just put in a period of prolonged grinding and wishing to have as much freedom on my hands as possible, I had very imprudently seen fit to take a vacation on this particular day; and accordingly, the twenty-four hours went by without affording anything that was especially worth observing. For that is the way it is. In the course of the days, there are certain ones which appear to have no other purpose in coming than that of adding to the sum-total and of bringing us imperceptibly nearer to death.

I feel, then, as I face the 27th of September, like a painter to whom, while he was out for a stroll, some one might say suddenly, "Sit down and paint"; and this in a spot where there was absolutely nothing to be painted. There is but one thing for the painter to do in such a case and that is to make out the best he can with a few straggling grass-blades and a heap of pebbles in the foreground.

Before my friends came in, I had begun the day by reading some of Ronsard's poems. The more anguish of mind present-day problems cause me, the more I find it necessary, morning and evening, to take a sort of bath in a pool of perfectly tranquil contemplation. I very much need to conserve in myself the feeling of duration, by which I mean, the feeling that there are certain human things which stand sheltered from insult and degradation, certain works over which time holds no sway. Nothing could be less contemporary than such reading matter as I found here. Merely very beautiful verses, answering to no other need than that of filling the heart and mind with a species of dynamic and thoroughly wholesome joy.

As I read, the thought occurred to me that, at the time of the Writers' Congress, sufficient notice had not been taken of this particular function of literature, which consists in *affording a continuity*. However far from me Ronsard's age may seem, however indifferent I may be to the problems of that time, the emotion inspiring the *Odes,* for the reason that it is extratemporal, remains for me an ever-present one; I at once espouse it and make it mine. And I experience a comfort and joy in the thought that those to come will discover the same charm as I in such a mating of minds. The body has need of bread; but the mind craves a bread that shall not stale.

These reflections have nothing to do with the date in question. If I make note of them here, it is for the reason that they were my thoughts this morning, and there is nothing else for me to tell.

Inasmuch as I had just returned to Paris the evening before, and no one as yet knew that I was back, I had no cause to fear being interrupted but might enjoy a peaceful chat with my friend, then sit down and write a few letters, fuming all the while over the ravenous chore that correspondence comes to be. Then I finished correcting the proofs which I was to take shortly to the *N.R.F.*

I always carry with me when I go out something in the form of reading matter, for I love to read while walking. It is an immaterial screen which one thus rears between himself and life. A fragile screen, that is constantly being toppled over, since whether one wills it or not, he finds himself sharing the animation of the street; but for all of that, there is a peculiar pleasure which comes from the jarring of the imaginary and the real. Oh! I am ready enough to grant you that this habit of mine is one opposed to my own ethical principles; but my system of ethics, fortunately, has room in it also for the inconsequential. And so, I had taken out with me on this day the two last numbers of *International Literature,* which I had just received; for there was a short story of Waldo Frank's which I was anxious to read, and an article by Mirsky on *The Bells of Basle.* And by chance, I came upon my own name in the "Thoughts Aloud" of A. Lejner, which I read with very keen pleasure, taking great comfort in this unlooked-for bit of sympathetic understanding from a distance.

In the office of the *Revue,* I ran into some one who was extremely well informed as to the inside of the political situation, and I had a long talk with him. It was very interesting, certainly, but not highly profitable, I am afraid; for in conversations of this sort, where I feel that the subject is beyond my depth, the effort which I put forth in order not to appear stupid at once makes of me a stupid person, indeed.

I had lunch alone, and then, with nothing on my hands to do, I went to the cinema. I am fond of the cinema, always, but more so than ever after a long period in the country. The film I saw was a British colonial one, that fairly oozed with a stupefying falsity, the whites being inevitably set up as models of courage, magnanimity and honor, while the blacks did their best to follow out the director's instructions by appearing as barbarous as they knew how. Not all of them; there were the members of one tribe who, having bowed to the English yoke and noble sentiments, showed themselves really worthy of becoming Britannic subjects.

Then there was another film (the truth is, it was at the cinema next door, where I had gone as soon as the colonial film was over; for by this time, I was off!), a French picture this one, well played, so far as that goes, and not at all boring. Like many others that we produce, alas, it was a depiction of utter decay. A wretched swine, endowed with a vast paternal love which was supposed to render him likable in spite of everything, was to be seen going in for the filthiest sort of financial deals and conniving trickery; but these foul doings were wreathed with a halo of sublimity, by being accomplished for the love of his daughter's beautiful black eyes. As a result of it all, a father's love became as repellent

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as any ugly, venal affair. I exaggerate, I know, but not to any considerable extent. The turning of love into an excuse for the vilest weakness is a good deal more repulsive to me than is mere mediocrity. If I did not so cherish that love which exalts, I should not so despise the love that degrades. And it is this latter which our literature and our cinema are too frequently concerned with portraying. In three-fourths of the novels and films that we meet with, it would appear that woman has no other mission in life than to lead man to the brink of catastrophe.

But in spite of all this, the film was entertaining and, as I have said, well played. It is owing to the number of elements involved that it so hard for a film to achieve the dignity of a work of art. But there is another reason, which is that we so readily put up with productions in the cinema whose equivalent in mediocrity we would not tolerate in literature.

I next saw (and I must confess that this was in a third house, where news-reels only were being shown) a state funeral, lines of marching soldiers, parades, horse and automobile races, and, for the third time—the public appearing to like the thing, the other two houses had put on the same silly spectacle—a slow-motion race. I left, fed up with it all. After a long period of work in the country, I could find, in my own eyes, some sort of justification for such a debauch. As to how other eyes than mine may look upon it, I am little concerned with that. Nevertheless, being called upon to present to the public a day out of my life, I am by no means content that the day should be one which is so little to my credit.

"You have no one to blame but yourself for its not being better filled."

Yes, I know; that is what I kept saying to myself when evening came and I found myself affected by a kind of nausea for all that I have set down here. I hesitated. Would it not be better to relate how I had spent the day of the 26th, which had been happily and purposefully filled? Or the day following, which, by way of reaction, I proposed to devote to work? But I do not like cheating; and so, as I came home——It is, I repeated, the blank nothingness of a day off, a day lost, that I must depict. And I have not so many more of them to live. Let me, then, before I turn the latch on the 27th, endeavor to get out of myself at least a few lofty thoughts. It's no use; I can think of nothing but asininities. Yet, it wasn't so late. I might have spent an hour revising the translation of Jef Last's novel. What I did instead was to go over in my mind those verses of Ronsard's which I had started learning by heart that morning; and in doing so, I experienced all over again their soothing effect. Whereupon, I turned the page of this day in my Diary, a page which, had it not been for the engagement I had taken upon myself to fulfill, would have remained forever a blank.

The Runners

PRUDENCIO DE PEREDA

I AM lying across the bridge holding on to the low rail with my right hand, my head bending over under it, and vomiting into the water going fast underneath with the moon riding in it, the whole body shaking with the spasms, when very suddenly it comes to a stop and I pull my head in and slowly lift it to lean against the rail, and then I see him come running up the path in the dark and on to the bridge. When he gets close to me I see that he is crying and I hear him saying, "She's dead! She's dead!"

My mouth is open and I look at him, but I do not say anything and my hand begins to slip off the rail. "At last," I think, "at last." Then my hand comes off and I go down slowly with my back hitting the boards and my head hanging over the edge, still thinking that and the lips beginning to mutter, "At last! At last!"

Now the sky is blue and the stars are white spots in it and I can look up at it and watch the blueness and the whiteness of it, but before I could not stand doing this. I could not do anything. They made me stay outside of the house that she was dying in because I could not see her in pain and I trembled. "You can't do anything for her. Go on. Go away from here." They told me this while my stomach began to move inside and to gurgle from fright. When I began to walk away my knees were shivering and then my whole body began to shiver, so I went to my aunt's house and down to the wine room and I began to drink the red wine.

Sitting in the room on the first floor I could look down the road and see the door of her house and how lonely it looked now. Only her father and an old woman were there with her. No one in the pueblo wanted to help a "Communist" bitch fight death. It was a Catholic pueblo.

I took a drink and I remembered that in the night she used to tell me they were used to it. I had to sneak out of the house to go and be with her, because my aunt did not understand about us. Her father did, and some nights we stayed in the house and talked with him about Socialism. We could be very much together then because we both hated the Spanish Socialists, but the old man had faith. He laughed at us and said we were extremists. "They'll bring the revolution," he warned. "They'll bring the revolution."

"Yes," I said, "yes, they will; on fascism's little ass." It sounded funny in Spanish. That was in 1934 in June.

When we two had talked I always used to ask her,

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"Where does it get you? Where the hell does it get you?"

And once she said, "When we find the truth we can't all run away from it."

In the darkness I saw her head turn to me and then the white teeth and the shine of the eyes. "What do you wish that I do?" I said.

"You stay and fight."

"But I have told you already that I have not the courage."

"Yes, you have it."

"No. No, Senora, no."

"Don't you defy the people here and not go to mass?"

"These poor fools!"

"Poor fools, eh? If you anger them they will lynch you."

"Oh, clearly."

We did not say anything for a while and I thought about the organizer they threw out of a seven-story window at home and about how long it took them to get to Sacco after that; but they got him! I told her about this. "They got him. They got him in the end."

"What must the masses think of him! Of that great one!"

"Yes," I said, "what? They remember him as that anarchistic bastard."

"Heh! *Vaya!*" she said.

I took another drink. I took it out of the bottle and now I was drunk. I yelled up to my aunt. Then I remembered that everybody was away at a fiesta in another pueblo. It was a religious fiesta and they had not wanted to take me. So I held the bottle in my hand and looked at the wine, thinking about what I should do. I said, "I want to drink some more," to myself and then I poured the wine in a skin and went outside. It was dark and there seemed to be a wind coming from the river but I did not feel cold, only very tired as I walked. I went up towards her house for some way and then I turned and went down to the river and lay on the bridge drinking. No one would come that way after dark.

I remembered vomiting into the water, and now I remembered everything. This clean little man crying and wringing his hands and looking down at me was her father. I lifted my head and looked up at him and then I pushed my hand up to him. He held it and pulled me up and we went walking down and then up to the pueblo.

"Don't you cry," I told him, "don't cry." My stomach felt clean and my head was clear and I even remembered to be bitter. He did not cry any more.

He put me to bed and when he bent over me to put the blankets up he said, "You sleep well, Mickey, eh? Tomorrow we are going to do a very important thing."

"Yes, Anastasio," I said, "Yes," nodding my head and beginning to drowse already, wondering about what he meant and if there was anything important now.

In the morning we went to order a white coffin. It was very early and the sun had not come up yet. All around us the pueblo looked gray, but I did not mind this because my body felt fine. I had not been to see her yet and we did not talk about it. We walked very fast over the dirt and we were very quiet. Anastasio had his best suit on but he did not have a tie. They never wear ties here. I had on a polo shirt under my jacket.

When we got to Benito's he was in the yard at the side of his house looking at the sky. He was not surprised to see us. He knew about her being sick.

"Good days," he said.

"Very good ones," we said to him.

He looked at Anastasio. "She died?"

"Yes, she died."

"I feel it," said Benito. (*Yes, I thought, how much you must have felt it, you son of a bitch. He really hated her because he feared her.*)

"Thank you," Anastasio said to him. "I have come about the coffin. You know that?" He was very calm and quiet.

"I can make it for you. I can make it right away. A white one, no?"

"Yes, you know the size it will be. I can pay you for a strong one."

"Very good, I will make it strong." Benito looked at Anastasio. He was waiting for him to say something. They had forgotten about me. At last, Benito said it himself. "And what hour shall I tell the priest to come?"

"You need not do it."

"You don't want the priest?"

"No, I do not. She will be buried in a civil ceremony," Anastasio said. I took out a cigarette and began to light it. Benito was very upset.

"But, hombre, you can't do that. No one has ever been buried in our cemetery without a priest being there."

"I know already but it's a municipal cemetery, no?"

"Yes, that is true," Benito said.

He himself, Benito, had made twenty-seven signs containing the legend CEMENTERIO MUNICIPAL (black on white) for the entire province of Castilla la Vieja. They were later nailed on the door of the cemetery in each pueblo of the province. This was in accordance with the nationalization edict of the slow-moving Socialist Government. Before this they had belonged in an extraordinary way to the peoples of the pueblo but had been governed entirely by the priests. Now in many places militant Catholic factions had torn them from the doors. "This is our cemetery. It shall not be desecrated."

Benito thought of all this. He did not know what to say. He looked at Anastasio.

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"At what hour shall we come for it?" Anastasio said.

"What? For what? Oh!" He thought for a moment. "Let us say three o'clock. Good?"

"Yes, good." He turned to go and I turned with him.

"Anastasio," Benito said. We looked at him and he had his fingers at his mouth. He looked very puzzled and worried.

"It is the custom for me to go to the mayor for the funeral permit but I do not know what to do in this case. It is something rare. It is very rare."

"Do you want me to go, Benito?"

"I think that you must go."

"Then I shall go." He looked at me.

"I feel it," said Benito, "but—it cannot be."

"Thank you," said Anastasio. "It is good. *Abur.*"

"*Abur*," I said.

"*Adios*," said Benito.

We walked down to the house of the woman who washed and dressed the dead girls and I left him at her door and went home.

I went down into the tavern and took a vermouth half and half and some crackers for breakfast. After a while I poured a little bit of pure vermouth into the glass and watched the door of his house and soon I saw him and the old woman come and go in. I watched the house and began to feel like getting drunk again and I drank the vermouth slowly and was thinking about getting out the wine when I saw him and the old woman come out of the door, both walking very fast and arguing. They stood in the street and talked and she shouted but Anastasio spoke very normally. She said something very quickly and turned around and walked away. I went out to the doorway and yelled, "Hey, Senor Anastasio, come over here," and I went in to fix a glass of wine for him. He came over and we sat inside drinking the wine. He looked very quiet.

"What the hell is the matter?" I said finally.

"She won't prepare her."

"You don't tell me."

"Yes, she is a Catholic. She says she doesn't have to be dressed for a civil ceremony."

"That's fine." I looked at him and we drank slowly for a while.

"You are very sincere in this, no?"

"Yes," he said, "I am sincere."

"What do you want to do now, then?"

"Go to the mayor for the funeral permit."

"Less bad. He's a Socialist, no?"

"Yes, he is a Socialist, but he is a property owner, too."

"Oh!" I said. He kept looking at me and I bent my head and watched the empty glass in my hands. I tried to think of something very far away from all this but I kept remembering things about her, her face, her body and her mind all being together in my head and I knew that I would say "yes" when he would ask me to go to town with him. I could feel that he was going to ask me now and I lifted up my head and he did. I said, "Yes." I noticed that he was beginning to be tired.

When we got into the town we found the mayor very soon and he told us right away that he had heard about us. He was an old friend of my father's and he was very nice. He did not know what to do.

Who had told him? Oh, they told him. They told him. Who? Don Manuel? (*He looked at me with a funny look. I got you now, I said to me.*) No, not Don Manuel, Benito. Benito and the others. No, not Don Manuel. (*Don Manuel was the richest land owner in Castilla la Vieja and he had property in our pueblo.*) This is a very serious matter, Senores. We know, hombre; we know. I am thinking about it. I am working on it. Your path should be very clear. (*I said this.*) Yes, it is; it is. (*He did not like me now and the funny look came again.*) You go home, friend Anastasio, and I will come to the pueblo in a half-hour. Go with him, Mickey. (*To me.*)

Then the mayor walked away and we stood and watched him for a moment. After that we started to walk through the town towards the road to our pueblo. We walked very slowly and we did not look at the people walking around, laughing and talking. The things that had happened so far were small things but now they seemed very big and important and we felt the weight of their disappointment push down on our shoulders and hunch our bodies.

We came to the end of the pueblo and into the open country on the road and we stopped. The sun was very hot. Anastasio looked at me and smiled very weakly. I lowered my head and I felt like crying.

Now we had it. Well! So a Socialist mayor would think about granting a municipal burial permit! How wonderful!

We were like two runners in a cross country who have been going along for miles, smoothly and with hope, and then they are told that up ahead all places in the race have been taken. They do not stop running but nothing matters to them now. They will finish almost mechanically.

Now nothing mattered to us but we could not stop. Everything we did was done because we had hoped to bury her truly and decently before. We went on like the runners.

We went home walking slowly. We put her in the coffin that had been taken to the house, my whole body trembling, not being able to take myself away from him now, held in by the common ground of our defeat that we were running into. We went out in the yard and then we went over to my aunt's.

We ate crackers and drank wine. We watched the door of his house and we did not talk. And so it was that in silence we saw the mayor come to the door

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of Anastasio's house and in silence that he was with Don Manuel.

(*The runners are nearing the broken tape lying across the dusty road.*)

We walk across to them and they smile at us but we do not smile back.

(*The runners are only concerned with this last lap. They hold up their heads and go on.*)

The mayor talks to Anastasio very hurriedly and I stand with Don Manuel a little away from them but we are still together. We cannot be separated now, and, even as to a tired runner in the last lap, thoughts came to me in little jumps, pushed themselves into my mind, bounded as if by the intakes of breath. These:

when Don Manuel's mother died in our pueblo —puff—*he was making millions in Cuba*—puff— *and he ordered a big stone*—puff— *to be put on the grave*—puff—*previously*—puff—*the cemetery had had no stones*—puff—*it was too*—puff— *little and it was communal*—puff—*it was twelve feet by six*—puff— *feet and everybody was buried* —puff—puff—*in whatever spot was 'new'*—puff —*and then they trusted to the good earth to*— puff—*make it new again soon*—puff—*well*—puff —*this big stone*—puff—*took up a big*—puff— *space and caused more concentration*—puff—*so then, years later*—puff—*the people wanted to increase the width of*—puff—*it by two feet and*— puff—*they went to Don Manuel who*—puff— *owned the land*—whee—*and he was very kind*— puff—*most kind, they said*—ugh—*for he sold it to them at cost*—phew— *price, he was very Catholic* —shu—*even though he had married*—puff—*his niece*—shu—*and conceived*—phew—*an idiot son* —phew—*now*—puff—*he was seeking*—puff—*to keep the*—phew—*memory of his mother*—shu— *sacred*—ugh—*and*—phew— *undefiled* —phew — *now*——*now*——

Anastasio kept nodding his head, even as a tired runner, at whatever the mayor was suggesting and when they looked up at us again the mayor was smiling and very happy. He came over to me.

"Everything is fine, hombre, He doesn't have to have a mass, just a priest at the grave."

"Did he say, 'Yes'?" I said.

"Yes, he did. Sure!"

I looked over at Anastasio and we looked at each other and now we saw the end and

(*The runners see the end and look towards each other as they go on. They have turned the last bend in the road and now they see the crowd at the finish line. They take a deep breath. It is like a sigh of companionship and as if saying, "Every man for himself now," and they bend their heads and spurt. One runner goes a little forward. The other comes up to him. They go on. Now the first one breaks clean and goes forward as*—)

Anastasio turned around with his face dead and walked slowly up the steps and into the house and I stood and watched him, not seeing the others, just as

(*The other runner with mouth open can only follow the more fleet one with his eyes because he cannot reach him physically*—)

but in my mind I saw him walking past her and into the other rooms, walking about, because I knew the way he walked and the place of the rooms. I could not see him take the automatic out of the little drawer in his wardrobe because I did not know he had one and I could only stay with my mouth open as he came to the door with it and then taking only a moment to point it, working very fast, with his face changed to a vivid color now, he shot Don Manuel twice in the back and the mayor in the chest as he turned around to him and then the door closed quickly, I stood looking at it,

(*as the second runner stops for a second, his stride breaking as he sees the first runner cross the line, and then he goes on himself*)

and then I went up to the door and pushed on it. It was locked and behind me I began to hear people shouting and someone was running. They were all

(*running about and congratulating the runners. The second runner is a little dazed. He stands about and now he smells smoke. Smoke? Oh, it's nothing —someone has lit a cigarette for him—but this smoke is very thick and white. Look down*—)

it is coming out of the bottom of the door and now through the cracks in the shuttered window of her room. I had waited too long, I thought. I yelled, "Anastasio," and kicked at the bottom of the door. People were running around the house very close now and shouting as

(*the second runner is recovering and laughing and*)

"Anastasio!" A flame came out of her window in a wide wipe and the smoke under the door came thicker and whiter and I began to step back. Someone was holding my arm and beginning to pull me back. "Come on, Mickey." It was Fortunato. "Come on. *Vamos!*"

(*They are taking the runners away. The first runner is up ahead, lost in the crowd, and a friend takes the second runner by the arm to his car. "Come on, kid. It's all over." "So soon?" the runner says.*)

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THEATRE CHRONICLE

Basing his story quite obviously on events connected with the Sacco-Vanzetti case, Mr. Maxwell Anderson, in *Winterset,* has attempted to utilize modern materials for a classical tragedy written in blank verse. The action of the play takes place in a section beneath one of the Manhattan bridges; and, in passing, it should be remarked that Mr. Jo Mielziner's poetically realistic bridge set rendering this atmosphere is as beautiful as one may exepcet to see in many a season. The drama grows out of events and personalities connected with the framing and execution of an anarchist, Romagna. A lad named Garth who was a member of the gang (corresponding to the Morelli gang) that committed the crime for which Romagna died, lives under the bridge with his father, Esdras, and his sister, Miriamne. Trock, leader of this gang, is obsessed with anxiety lest a re-opening of the case send him to the chair, and he is determined to wipe out every one of his partners-in-crime; his threat to bump Garth off forces the lad to remain exiled in his own home. Two other personalities in the case wander into this section. One is Judge Gaunt (Judge Thayer) who presided at the framed trial of the innocent man; now, he is tormented and driven half-mad with a bad conscience, and he stops strangers on the street to tell them that he did not send an innocent man to the chair. The other is Mio, Romagna's son, who follows clue after clue, in order to wreak revenge and to clear his father's name before the law; his trail has led him to Garth. He and Miriamne fall in love; gradually, he uncovers proof of his father's innocence; he confronts Judge Gaunt with these facts, and there follows a lengthy discussion on the nature of the courts, the Judge Jesuitically defending himself; he tells the police, and points to Trock as one of the real murderers; the police laugh at him. In the end, Trock realizes that he knows too much, and every avenue of escape is cut off; if he leaves the house of Esdras, he will be shot down. He leaves, not so much from internal compulsion as from the necessity of his dying if Mr. Anderson is going to fulfil his intentions and write a tragedy. During the entire third act, Mio is preparing to die, with exclamations and declamations; he attempts to escape and is shot down. Enacted by Mr. Burgess Meredith, Mio dies all over the stage. Miriamne then shouts out that she knows the truth and will speak it; she is shot down. Esdras, who represents mellowed and philosophical old age in the play, brings down the curtain with a recitation on the theme that man should be unsubmittingly defiant to fate.

Mr. Anderson has here used parallels to the Sacco-Vanzetti case in such a way that he achieves distortion. For instance, one of the most important sources of motivation is Trock's anxiety lest the case be re-opened. Socially, this is unrealistic and creates a false impression of the conduct of the state in class-struggle cases. As we know, at the time of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, Vanzetti was first tried for a crime in Bridgewater, convicted and then brought into court for the South Braintree murder as a convicted criminal. All efforts to re-open that case, all attempts to introduce important evidence clearing Vanzetti were disregarded; similarly all efforts to introduce additional evidence, such as that pointing toward the Morelli gang, were disregarded. If such a case could not be re-opened when it was on, how, years later, would it be re-opened? In order for us to believe Mr. Anderson's motivation here, we then must assume that the state acts differently than we know it to act; in consequence, an important source of motivation is, to say the least, most picayune and special; and Mr. Anderson is not trying to write a special, but a representative play. Thus, one whole basis of motivation just crumbles, destroying the possibility of one accepting the play. Similarly, we find in his characterization of Judge Gaunt, an illustration of judicial conscience that is a severe strain on our credibility, particularly since we know something of Judge Thayer. As a judge, Gaunt is unquestionably beyond recognition.

These criticisms are not totally extra-dramatic. They involve the assumptions we must make with the author, if we are to "believe" in his play. One must assume that even if Mio does establish the proof of his father's guilt, the case can be re-opened; one must assume that the judge's tormented conscience is consistent with both his character and his official position. I, for one, could not make these assumptions, and hence to me the play is internally phony, and its tragedy becomes bathos. In addition, Mr. Anderson's intentions further ravage the consistency of his motivation. The actions of his characters do not grow consistently out of antecedently relevant causes; they are built out of universals; in consequence a fictionization of the Sacco-Vanzetti case is used as a mere peg on which to hang a demonstration of *a priori* universals—man's destiny, and the four dark winds of fate, love, hate, revenge. The characters thus act in consonance with generalized categories of human conduct, and the categories make the action, instead of the action making the categories. The tragedy here is not one of necessity, but of preconception. Thus when gangster guns bark death to Mio, in the name of fate and destiny, Mr. Anderson is falling into the ridiculous. In addition, his poetry is not more than ordinary and derivative. The themes, insofar as they emerge, seem to be that love cures hate, that man must meet his fate with unsubmitting defiance—they emerge as platitudes only. *Winterset* is confused, muddleheaded and internally phony; in addition, it gives a distorted impression of the historic events which it parallels.

Mr. Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End* is one of the most successful hits of the season. In his preceding play, *Men in White,* Mr. Kingsley had both a hit and a Pulitzer prize winner. That was just a trumped-up contrivance of over-romanticized dramaturgy, with one good scene set around an operating table. At least, such is my judgment of the play after having read it. (Published by *Covici, Friede.*) And although I frankly believe that it is not worth reading, I urgently suggest that my readers purchase this book; the play can be disregarded, but there are thirty-odd footnotes generously appended by Mr. Kingsley, and these should be read. In fact, the simplest and quickest way I know of securing a scientific and medical education is by reading these expository footnotes of Mr. Kingsley's. Early in the first scene, a character refers to the X-ray, and thus, Mr. Kingsley has an illuminating footnote telling us that "it has . . . become so important that today a good physician would not set a broken finger without it." Similarly, in these notes, one can find such information on surgery as the following: "Surgery, which is a fine art requiring, in addition to other things, the digital sensitivity of a pianist, demands incessant practice."

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If you buy and read these footnotes, you will even learn that "Medicine has advanced further in the last fifty years than in the preceding fifty centuries." Mr. Kingsley's footnotes are *required reading.*

Some time ago, Mr. Kingsley contributed an article to *The New York Times,* describing how and why he wrote *Dead End.* If I recall that article correctly, it seems as if Mr. Kingsley was wandering along the docks by the East River, his mood philosophical. Seeing the urchins diving and swimming, it somehow occurred to him that ours was a strabismic civilization producing sarphodytes. This is the germ of the play. Also, it occurred to Mr. Kingsley that the theatre needed a return to realism. And so we can consider *Dead End* as a realistic play, concerning a strabismic civilization that produces sarphodytes.

All the action in this play occurs on a tenement street ending in the river, and standing next to a swanky, modern apartment hotel. The play tells of the urchins diving and swimming in the river, squabbling amongst themselves, stealing; like the boys in Henry Roth's impressive first novel, *Call It Sleep,* they are savages in the midst of civilization. The lives of the adults they see around them prefigure their ends. Thus, one of the characters is a famous and hunted gangster whose school of experience has been the same street and the same milieu as theirs. In Act Two, he is shot down like a dog by G-Men. In addition, there is a prig for an adult hero, an unemployed architect, and he falls in love with a girl from the nearby apartment hotel.

Although *Dead End* is meant to be a play, it is actually a spectacle. Whenever the juvenile actors occupy the center of the stage, it is alive and exciting, and one cannot get too much of them. Against the background of Mr. Geddes's remarkably photographic set, one feels as if one is actually watching East Side kids in the raw. However, when the kids are in the background, the play is merely tabloid eyewash; and before it is finished, one is so harassingly bored with sub-tabloid banalities, that one begins disregarding the play and studies Mr. Geddes's set, counting the bricks he has so realistically put into his tenement house. Every adult character is rubber-stamped with Hollywood and the New York *Daily Mirror.* The love scenes are the final word in banality. As a spectacle, *Dead End* is worth seeing because of the juveniles and the set; as a play, it is even worse than *Men in White.*

JAMES T. FARRELL

Revolution Is a Form of Necking

(*Soak the Rich—Astor Theatre.*)—What we Communists thought was an inexorable law of capitalist development toward monopoly has been demolished, in one industry at least, by the dazzling emergence of an independent producer, writer, director, financier, trail-blazer—that veritable Jonathan Swift, Miguel de Cervantes and Noel Coward all rolled in two, that Lewis and Clark expedition of the intellect—Hecht and MacArthur. Sure and a far cry it is from the days when young Ben and Charlie were huddled together on the corn-shuck mattress of their bleak, rudely furnished shanty in New York, laying their plans to unsaddle the philistine oligarchs of Warner Brothers and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, stocking their minds with the bitter, bitter, brilliant cynicism that was to captivate our hearts. A far cry indeed from those early days of struggle to 1936, when the names of Coonskin Ben and Trapper Charlie burn a foot high over the marquee of Broadway's Astor Theatre, when their smiling faces, set off by jaunty top hats, appear vastly enlarged in the lobby over this incisive quatrain:

We're the gents that wrote the yarn
And here's what it's about:
Class ideas don't mean a thing
When Love kicks them out.

The yarn! What a characteristic of true greatness thus to describe that pyrotechnic profusion of satire, social philosophy and superb analysis of passion contained in *Soak the Rich.* Acutely, it is made to revolve about a lovable, harassed millionaire. His wife cheats and his stomach is bad, his butlers bully him and his daughter is bored. It is all he can do to remain wrily charming, for day in, day out radicals are planting time-bombs in his path and boring from within in the university he founded. To conceal their nature, they shave their long hair, and their leader, Buzz Jones, makes inflammatory speeches, to which they respond by chanting "Kill Dean Philpotts, kill, kill, kill." To complicate matters, persnickety daughter Bindy and Buzz fall in love with each other, and Bindy renounces her father, calls him a parasite, a worm living off a leaf, and she goes to live with Buzz but Buzz wouldn't live with her because he is dedicated to a cause, he wants to be a leader and the Russian men and women leaders simply work side by side all day and all night, no sex, see? When Bindy finds that Buzz is out to dampen her ardor, she walks out on him and gets kidnaped by the leader of another radical sect, and his name is Mooglia. He ties her up in a chair but her father and three G-Men save her and take her home. So meanwhile Buzz realizes that he loves her more than he loves the theory of surplus value, and he gives her a buzz, but all he gets is a toss of her shapely but frigid shoulder.

Her scorned but lovable old dad (Walter Connolly) decides that the only way to save Bindy from subversive Buzz is to marry her off to a discarded but willing fiancé, who parenthetically wants to know what's up anyhow; and here is where the audience is allowed a glimpse into the play's subtly contrived machinery. Subtly, subtly, the playboy is told that the ceremony had better take place immediately, or else he might never be able to take the honeymoon trip in time to celebrate the cherry blossom season in the Orient. So gradually on the night the engagement is to be announced, Buzz arrives in front of the millionaire's home with a mob of his fellow-radicals, yelling for the reinstatement of a Professor Popper. They are led by a band paid for with the money from Bindy's pawned bracelets.

At this point both the nerves and the seats of the audience are on edge. They lean forward, expecting to see that palatial residence razed, its revellers put to the bomb, but again Hecht and MacArthur do the unexpected. The college boys, after all, are wholesome lads with keen, young appetites. While Buzz is being received inside, they get drunk on

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champagne served by the butlers, and they sing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," i.e., Bindy's dad. That amiable old codger has in the meantime found out that Bindy really loves Buzz, and he says, "Sure, if you want that whiskered fool (i.e., Popper) reinstated, you can have him." Just so's Bindy is happy. On the balcony, Bindy says, "Darling we'll work together side by side," and then, as the fadeout sentence, the punch line, Buzz adds, "But not like in Russia."

Soak the Rich is doing feebly at the box office, but that is the fate of art in America, and those few of you who have seen it will testify that the account above leaves out the many highlights and striking situations. Too, it must be confessed that this writer was prevented from savoring it to the full by lack of foresight in his choice of a companion. She was a college radical who, as might have been expected, misconstrued the intention of Messrs. Hecht and MacArthur, and she booed and stamped throughout the picture. She thought there was malice and slander in the implication that radicals are in the habit of turning Party funds to very personal uses. She thought there were some points hidden in making Bindy's father lovable and the radicals either megalomaniacs or foolish youngsters. She had gone through several anti-war strikes and many more demonstrations, but had yet to see the waterhose turned on a harmless, fat dean. She had scarcely ever killed a dean or seen a bomb, and she had drunk champagne only once, and then under the delusion that it was ginger ale. To the end she maintained that there was barbed purpose in putting the few genuinely liberal, not communist, sentiments of the script into the mouth of an empty-headed, jeweled heiress in love with a radical.

What she could not understand was that Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur are serious writers, independent of the Hollywood philistines, social satirists admittedly intent on producing a "hilarious satire on the foibles of all of us." The fact that they happened to pick on Communists is incidental, or else very possibly just Bolshevik self-criticism. We know they are in favor of revolution, because their mouthpiece in the picture says that "Revolution is only our current young generation's form of necking." Necking is the Hollywood word for something else, something we all like to do, something Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur do have a weakness for. And then in *Soak the Rich* they have definitively wrecked the old slander of Stalin's being a dictator in a sentence of singularly haunting quality and terseness that many of our left-wing writers might well imitate: "The only real Dictator is old Dan Cupid."

College radicals must not regard this picture as a slander on their movement, and they must not misinterpret an occasional good-natured slip on the part of Hecht-MacArthur, because even the team's predecessor, Jonathan Swift, pulled a boner in kidding Isaac Newton, and great satire requires boldness and freedom of interpretation.

In the compass of this piece it is possible to give only the highlights of the movie month. There have been a few besides *Soak the Rich*. Jean Harlow has confessed to an interviewer that her diet seldom includes meat and that she has an ambition to write. Dick Powell has published his final intention to marry Joan Blondell. Ginger Rogers has been given a commission in the Texas Navy. For the first time there will be a close-up of Marlene Dietrich kissing, in the film *Desire,* with Gary Cooper. And Harrison Carroll of the New York *Daily Mirror* reports that Lupe Velez's tiny chihuahua dog has just undergone a successful caesarian operation. The George Arlisses are infanticipating.

EDWARD NEWHOUSE

BOOKS

Intellectual Ping-Pong

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY TODAY AND TOMORROW, *edited by Horace M. Kallen and Sidney Hook.*

Messrs. Kallen's and Hook's collection was apparently made to order for that shrinking market which still goes in for the intellectual rages of each season, flitting from psychoanalysis to physics to the love-life of the Trobriand Islanders. When the editors of this symposium selected their contributors, they must have had the tastes of such an audience in mind. Consequently, the reader finds Mr. Will Durant popping up in the book to give an ecstatic appreciation of "the vicarious exaltation of Bosanquet" and the "warm, seductive charm of a *theory* of Aphrodite." Another contributor, blurbed as the "Will Rogers of American philosophy," adds the homely touch which makes such a symposium human and marketable. And to make their concoction palatable for certain tastes, the editors have included an appropriate dash of religious apologia by Michael Williams, a touch of mysticism by Wilmot H. Sheldon and quite a lot of old-fashioned nonsense by John Herman Randall, Jr.

Some degree of cuteness is thus achieved. But the volume as a whole certainly does not give the "faithful picture of the struggle of ideas and ideals in American life upon the plane of philosophy" which the editors promise in their introduction. The twenty-five essays in the book have little connection with the mainstream of American life; they have even less to offer in the way of a solution for the problems of the day. With a few notable exceptions—Arthur E. Murphy, Ernest Nagel and Paul Weiss—the papers do not even touch upon some of the interesting work being done in technical branches of philosophy like logic and scientific method. Most of the contributors rehash time-worn arguments about the need for a science of ethics, the meanings of meaning and the value of metaphysics. The results in a less respectable field would be called bromides.

The confusion and general futility of the book reminds this reviewer of a philosophy seminar that he once attended. The atmosphere was the same as this symposium: the students even resembled the contributors to the book. In the seminar there was a Jewish student—down from New York because this particular university could still find jobs for philosophy instructors. There was an engineer who had been overcome by religious feelings and who had joined the department to wrestle with his soul and ethics. There was a student from a local Catholic college who had been sent to dip into profane knowledge, so he could act as the devil's disciple in the scholastic discussions of the priests. There was an Albanian studying mathematics and compelled to attend because he needed philosophy credits. Then there were a strange assortment of old maids of both sexes, all making a life-work of some pin-point in the history of primitivism.

The seminar dealt with various theories of time. The Great-Mind-and-Campus-Terror who lectured at us was famous for having shown that there were thirteen kinds of pragmatism in Dewey's philosophy and fifteen kinds of romanticism in romanticism. He demonstrated to us that from a metaphysical point of view there were contradictions

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in Einstein's relativity equations. In distress the reviewer, a science student looking for ways of tackling the paradoxes of his work, appealed to the head of the physics department for assistance. But since the latter was a German with a poor grasp of English, the Great Mind was able to destroy the physicist and the theory of relativity simultaneously, and move on to more important questions like theories of animal psychology in the sixteenth century. Because of their speculative range, the latter problems naturally had more attraction for the Campus Terror than modern psychology, with its narrow insistence upon experiment and empirical verification of theory.

This seminar, with its intellectual stuffiness and its complete unconcern with the questions vexing the natural and social scientists at the same university, was a cross-section of the best in American academic philosophy. In the hands of its present practitioners, it has become a kind of intellectual ping-pong which provides diversion, in addition to bread and butter, for its devotees. The majority of the profession faithfully carry out the rule recently laid down by that eminent educator, Dean Charles Franklin Thwing: "The professor should avoid the discussion of things of popular or timely interest which may bring not only himself and his department, but the whole university, into disrepute." This is especially true of those thinkers who specialize in social philosophy but will have nothing to do with the sordid things of the market place, or of those who dabble in ethics but will not touch the immediate problems posed by a decaying social order. They have no real sense of values; to them it is as important to solve a minute problem in language as it is to provide solutions for the fundamental problems of society. They are very much like those unfortunates who never get over the effects of a freshman course in logic. This is unintentionally revealed by Professor Hook when he remarks, in his contribution to the book: "I made a perfect nuisance of myself by the indefatigable spirit with which I pointed out, classified and held up to public light the fallacies in the perfectly comprehensible speech of my friends."

We can cite the case of Professor Hook as an example of what happens to a man who is completely seduced by the external charms of American academic philosophy. He is practically the only contributor to the book who is fully aware of how much of bourgeois philosophy "has been an apologia for some vested social right." He has read and studied Marx, Engels and Lenin. Yet he has turned his back on revolutionary thought because of his quarrel with what he chooses to call a "political church," as well as because he seems to enjoy the make-believe of professional philosophy.

In his desire to dissociate himself from the revolutionary conclusions of dialectical materialism, he has fled not only from the name (he now calls his philosophy "experimental naturalism") but has progressively shed most of the basic principles of Marxism. He has reached the point where he must on every occasion try to prove the opposite of what the revolutionary movement says. This has led him to make ridiculous apologies, in a *Nation* review, for Pareto—who was characterized even at a recent meeting of American philosophers as "yielding justifications of ruling class violence, extreme nationalism and bitter attacks upon humanitarian weakness." Professor Hook's isolation from the revolutionary movement and his frantic desire to rationalize his position have made him praise G. D. H. Cole for making significant contributions to Marxism, although students like Strachey and Corey have clearly shown how Cole misinterprets Marxian doctrine.

Despite its title, this book says nothing about the living philosophy of today which will yield the significant philosophic solutions of tomorrow. Scientists like Levy, Struik, Bernal, Langevin have recently found in dialectical materialism the theoretical roots for that vast synthesis of knowledge that looms ahead as the new Copernican revolution in thought. Its principles are forcing their way into professional circles: Marxists have participated in the symposiums of the Aristotelian Society in England and at the international congresses of philosophy. American thought, it is true, is more backward in this respect than in England and France, but a number of students here are beginning to make their way to this unified philosophy of society and science. They are not represented in this book, but they will play a large role in writing the important American philosophy of today and tomorrow.

DAVID RAMSEY

In the Mold of Poverty

FROM THE KINGDOM OF NECESSITY, *by Isidor Schneider. Putnam.* $2.50.

Turning to his own early life for the material of a social novel, Isidor Schneider has found it in abundance. There are two difficulties, however. Very similar experience has already provided the material for a number of other autobiographical novels, and the pattern of events described in *From the Kingdom of Necessity* seems superficially to point a different political moral from the one Schneider wishes to make. Born weak and sickly into a poor Jewish family in a filthy Galician village near the end of the last century, Isaac Hyman, the hero, was burdened with nearly every disadvantage that society could heap on his skinny shoulders. Brought to America with his family, he went through all the commonly described immigrant experiences—the difficulties of getting here, the disappointments, the cheating, the overwork, the crowded bedrooms, strikes, unemployment, unbearable job after unbearable job, hunger, dirt and disease. But these difficulties were met with a tremendous capacity for physical labor and endurance, and Isaac, talented and eager, somehow struggled through to a position of comfort, prestige and security. America, it would seem, was still a land of some opportunity, economic barriers could still be surmounted if one had energy and will, and in 1926 under Coolidge, when the book ends, Isaac has just been married and seemed at the beginning of a successful career.

The difficulties that this material presents are reflected clearly in the frequent paragraphs of editorial comment that somewhat superfluously adorn the tale. In part they are truistic; essays written in not always distinguished prose to explain what the incidents have insufficiently dramatized. In part they go to some pains to say that although the conclusion of this volume would make the happy ending of a typical bourgeois novel, Isaac was definitely not happy in his escape from poverty and drudgery; he was restless and dissatisfied; his life lacked meaning. Later he "was to" experience and "was to" know things that enabled him to understand this period of his development. It is only in such passages and in his attempts to broaden horizons that one feels a split in Schneider's purpose and in the form of the novel.

But in the dominant impression of *From the Kingdom of Necessity*—and it is a powerful one—the elements I have

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described play a very small part. It is not really an intellectual novel at all. Although Isaac is a talented and successful writer, we know almost nothing of what he writes, of the books that influence him. Although he takes an active part in Zionist and pacifist movements, we remember the conflict of personalities, not of ideas. We have no sense of the streets in wartime, of the war's effects in little things, as we have in Dos Passos's novels. What we do have throughout the book is a sense of the vigor and charm of Isaac Hyman's personality. Even the paragraphs of commentary are not entirely alien to the form of the book, because they also express that personality in its later development. But most of all, Isaac Hyman is memorable because he is such a direct and sensitive register of class realities. It is not only a question of suffering, or exploitation, or injustice; it is a question of what these things become in the mind of a sensitive boy, of the values such an economic system creates, both for those who, by its standards, fail and those who succeed.

Best of all are the case studies and character sketches —thirty or forty of them—that fill most of the pages of the book, fully drawn and unforgettable pictures of employers and workers, intellectuals and aesthetes, women suffering and women loved, cheats, wastrels and gangsters. As in other powerful novels of the years of learning, we remember such characters even more clearly than the hero himself, because it was through them that he came to know himself and because of them that he changed. And we remember them in *From the Kingdom of Necessity* because, through studying their lives, Isaac Hyman came to understand the system which he now wants to destroy. OBED BROOKS

First Books

THEORY OF FLIGHT, *by Muriel Rukeyser. With a foreword by Stephen Vincent Benét. Yale University Press.* $2.00.

Muriel Rukeyser's poems are as a collection the most outstanding to be published within the last decade by a younger woman poet. And from a critical viewpoint, *Theory of Flight* should be of special significance to anyone interested in the advancement of modern poetry.

Undoubtedly the most vital (perhaps the only) contribution being made today to the art of poetry is the shift from the romantic-personal, individual consciousness to a collective, mass-identification with a universal consciousness. The true "revolutionary" poet is one who has grown beyond self-love sufficiently to discount the importance of his personal survival, and who is not only intellectually in sympathy with Marxian, or socialistic, beliefs, but is also emotionally identified with the class struggle. Judging from this critique, the reviewer must state, regretfully, that Miss Rukeyser is not as yet a "revolutionary" poet, though she is moving in that direction. There is real danger, however, that this poet, whose intellectual attainments are above the average, will encounter difficulty in effecting an essential transition from the "I" sympathiser type to the "we" collectively working, emotionally unconfused poet. For among the best and most sincere, emotionally, of her poems in this collection are those which draw from the romantic-lyric tradition.

Perhaps an analysis of the Preamble to *Theory of Flight* (the title poem) will help make this clear. This Preamble, like the main body of the poem, is composed of separate lyric chunks, or static verse-statements with no stanzaic building-up. It opens with some embracing, cosmic phrases that denote at least a mind capable of grasping more than small, factual happenings:

> *Earth, bind us close, and time; nor, sky, deride*
> *how violate we experiment again*
> *In many Januaries, many lips*
> *have fastened on us while we deified*
> *the waning flesh.*

Here, because the poet is expressing an abstract idea in physical imagery, the thought is clear, the form good. But as the poem progresses, her fondness for large words, her abrupt transitions and lack of integration in the subject-matter confuse the reader. The second part of this poem is didactic. Here Miss Rukeyser spoils her material by weighting it with exaggerated, sensual imagery. And in the concluding section she uses an already overworked romantic figure, seed-flower-fruit, and applies it to aeronautics—the Plane, in turn, symbolizing the flight of the intelligence toward a better life. This malfusion of romantic-metaphysical-mechanistic terms is one that a poet sure of his thought and craft would not be guilty of.

In the above connection I think it is unjust, if not harmful, for Stephen Benet to say of Miss Rukeyser in his introduction that she was apparently born with her craft already in hand. Miss Rukeyser has a number of poetic gifts, true; but she has not yet learned how to harness those gifts most effectively. In time, I think she will. To say also that there is in her work little of the "direct imitation or admirations which one unconsciously associates with a first book of verse," is equally unjust. There are reflections of certain contemporary contacts.

Mr. Benet has noted that Miss Rukeyser is an "urban" poet. He seems to find it curious, however, that she writes of dynamos, gyroscopes, electricity. There is scarcely a young poet worth naming who hasn't been doing so for a number of years—although comparatively few women have, as yet. In 1925, Harriet Monroe took a pioneer step with a poem called "The Turbine". Her ultra-feminine approach, her "humanization" of the machine in emotional terms, make a pertinent contrast-study with Miss Rukeyser's objective, factual statements in "Structure of the Plane":

> *On the first stroke of the piston, the intake valve opens,*
> *the piston moves slowly from the head of the cylinder*
> *drawing in its mixture of gas and air.*

Both Monroe and Rukeyser, however, proceed to philosophize about the Machine, the former saying that Madam Turbine leads one "far out into the workshop of the world," and out from earth to ether; the latter:

> *We burn space, we sever galaxies,*
> *solar systems about Shelley's head.*

Neither poet has fully digested her two-fold experiential contact. In both poems, objective stimulation comes first. Secondly, the emotional current is turned on. The Monroe poem is typical of a certain "school" of poetic writing; equally so is the Rukeyser poem of 1935 vintage. Both are in the "style" of a moment. Miss Rukeyser reverses gears, and following the lead of the modern metaphysical poets makes humanity, individually and as a race, take on the attributes of a dynamo or a gyroscope. We find the human race, she says, reflecting "all history in a bifurcated Engine." Also, we humans

> *whirl in desire, hurry to ambition, return*
> *maintaining the soul's polarity.*

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This is imitative, scientific thinking, and as such already "dates".

Miss Rukeyser, in common with other left-wing poets, condemns parents and that generation which gave us the heritage of a capitalist-directed war and other social crimes. No one has expressed this attitude more bitterly than Auden, who says of the "perfect Pater and marvelous Mater"—

When we asked the way to Heaven, these directed us ahead
to the padded room, the clinic, and the hangman's little shed.

Miss Rukeyser tends to soften her indictment:

We focus on our times, destroying you, fathers
in the long ground: you have given strange birth
to us who turn against you in our blood
needing to move in our integrity, accomplices
of life in revolution, though the past
be sweet with your tall shadows

This repudiation of romantic blood-ties, and the setting up instead as parents (ancestors) the poets, statesmen and scientists who throughout history have been rebels against the *status quo,* envisionaries of a brotherhood of man, may be ruthless. But it is courageous and necessary in view of the social ideal yet to be attained. On this step which our younger poets have taken, if on none other, can be founded a hope for the future of poetry.

RUTH LECHLITNER

BEFORE THE BRAVE, *by Kenneth Patchen. Random House.* $2.00.

Whatever its qualities, the appearance of a new volume of left-wing verse is a welcome occasion for poetry as a whole. Poetry in America will become, increasingly, poetry composed of the images reflected by the social revolution. Every book that falls now into this course of development contributes, its failures and defects included, at least as much as the finished mirror-mysteries of yesterday's verse. Patchen's book, like Fearing's, Rolfe's, Rukeyser's, is important as an event and should be read.

Patchen writes what is known—in contradistinction, I suppose, to the unilinear narrative, emotional or moral theme-development of the academicians—as abstract poetry. Ideas and data come flying into focus from anywhere. Freed even from the requirements of qualitative unity or "mood"—which Fearing retains as an effective principle of organization—Patchen's poems are open to augmentation at any given point. All objective laws of form being thus dissolved, the poems depend entirely on Patchen's accumulative tastes and his sense of propriety. His arrangements contain two distinct types of emphasis: panoramic and commentatorial, depending on whether he is using the stuff taken from newspapers, leaflets and working-class history, or is trying to convey some private idea or sentiment.

The panoramic emphasis is predominantly displayed in his well-known "Joe Hill Listens to the Praying," and in several other poems. At the best, poems of this order can achieve, through the juxtaposition of recognized fact, emotions of ironic bitterness, resentment and determination. At their worst, general news-items, together with personal reminiscenses of trees, moons, girls, simply rotate around the "communist facts" of picket-lines, lynchings, Sacco and Vanzetti, like a dull mind revolving around the excitement-core of a bad conscience. In any event, the panoramas of our left-wing poets are already becoming banal, not because picket-lines, strikes, and Sacco and Vanzetti have been exhausted as the subject-matter of American poetry— on the contrary, they have scarcely been approached—but because the panoramic method contents itself with merely calling the roll of events and neglects the imaginative reconstruction.

As for the second type of emphasis in Patchen's verse: the whole first section, called Introduction, is an example of a grouping of words, images and statements, unrelated to each other except to the extent that the poet feels that all together they constitute a commentary.

I claim no tide can wrest from us
What good we are; nor country proud
Of lovers' Spring can gain parade
Of less than continents, to make us glad.

These correlations I find, in the main, totally ineffectual. Even if one could figure out what the second part of the first stanza means, and then relate it to the first part and to what follows, I doubt that it would be worth the trouble in connection with the quotations from the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address which serve as titles for the section. In fact, the idea behind this whole section is foolish: a Marxist poet has, in effect, gone out of his way to call attention to the fact that a pair of documents written by people who were neither Marxists nor poets, are vastly superior both in political clarity and with respect to language to anything he has to say about them decades later.

His internal sense of propriety alone does not do justice to Patchen's craftsman seriousness. It is absolutely essential that he devote his attentions to the meaning-structure of what he writes. Otherwise, his work will continue inevitably to be segmented with passages incomprehensible not only with respect to content but, primarily, with regards to poetical effect. What possible excuse can there be for chopping off the perception contained in the first two lines of the following with the badly-consonanted, wordy, unevocative and, to me at least, entirely meaningless, third line?

Whether my day is day for you
or light on other plane in other eyes,
is not renunciatory measure of speech.

A method which allows such irresponsibility in selection ought to be overhauled.

HAROLD ROSENBERG

A World Won

SEEDS OF TOMORROW, *by Mikhail Sholokhov. Knopf.* $2.50.

For the first time in my experience the collectivization campaign of the Soviet government has been interpreted in terms of flesh and blood. *Seeds of Tomorrow,* whose locale is the remote Cossack village of Gremachy Log, is a living record of these crucial days. The book translates the effects of a political decree into the actions and thoughts of breathing human beings, and at the same time manages to remain an exciting and swiftly moving tale of adventure, love, humor, intrigue and murder.

There was the incessant battle against time, the soil, weeds, insects, drought, cold and flood. But the most complex and puzzling enemy was man—or the deeply ingrained traits of men: ignorance, sloth, superstition, the resentment and active opposition of those who yearned for a return to the old life.

Davidov, locksmith from the city, came to the backward village as one of the twenty-five thousand sent out to aid in the collectivization program. Everything was new and

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strange; he longed for his familiar factory and comrades left behind. His hardest task was to understand the villagers. "... There was much in them that was incomprehensible to him, that was hidden behind a kind of impalpable curtain. The village was like a new type of complicated motor, and Davidov studied it intensely and tensely, trying to understand its mechanism, to see clearly every detail, to note every interruption in the daily incessant throbbing of this involved machine." But he keeps stubbornly at it, determined to set the pace even for the old farmers. "I'll die at the plough, but I'll do it! I'll plough at night by the light of a lantern, but I'll plough three acres. I mustn't do less!" And he won.

Sholokhov was nurtured by the Don country, and no part of it is alien to him: the birds, animals, plants, colors, sounds and smells of the steppes. The ice melting in the spring, the winter cold, Davidov plowing: "The rich black layer of earth slipped from under the share over the polished mouldboard, turning over on its side like a sleepy fish." The phenomena of nature are here as fully and vividly delineated as in lesser novels by those who timorously dodge the social overtones dominating *Seeds of Tomorrow*. The new life whose birth-pangs are attended by sweat, pain and blood; the agony of tearing asunder the umbilical cord fastened to the past. Each character, though endowed with motivations and attributes distinct from the others, fits inevitably into the major theme, enriching and fulfilling it.

And here is humor, too. The salty proletarian wit touching on the universal, as indigenous to American plains and factories as to Russian steppes. There is a superannuated Cossack, fighter in his day, who feels degraded at his job of tending the collectivized fowls. He was dubbed "the hen feeler," and was twitted by a "Kalmik mare": "See that there's a basket of eggs by ploughing time or we'll make you ride the hens yourself." And there is the nun who spread the story that women of the collective farms who had reached the age of sixty would be compelled to hatch out eggs in the traditional manner by sitting on them. And the bureaucrat, Secretary of the District Committee, who wrote a note to his wife: "Liza! I categorically instruct that you immediately and unconditionally supply the bearer of this note with dinner."

Meanwhile, the seeds of tomorrow are sprouting on the steppes, in the factories, in a new literature of which Sholokhov's book is a distinguished harbinger.

JACK CONROY

It Happened There

THE LAST CIVILIAN, *by Ernst Glaeser. Translated from the German by Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher. McBride.* $2.50.

In *The Last Civilian,* Ernst Glaeser continues his narrative of provincial life in Wurttemberg, begun in *Class of 1902,* skipping the early years of the Republic and fixing his attention on the critical period of the Nazi rise to power. This change of events has furnished him a more significant theme, and he has known how to transform it into a novel that is even better than his first. If it manages to circulate in Germany, it must awaken the bitterest remorse; for it must force the German reader to relive the mistaken enthusiasm and the careless illusions or the astounding indifference through which the average German permitted the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship. But for outsiders, who can take its story more calmly, it makes the history of the Nazi putsch live as only fiction can do. Glaeser does for what actually happened in Germany what Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* does for what might as readily take place in America. And because what has happened is easier to treat, because also Glaeser is incomparably the more sensitive novelist, *The Last Civilian* is incomparably the better novel.

At first the opponent of Hitlerism is bound to be disconcerted by the book. The heroic workers in their trade unions, the vast network of radical organizations, are missing from it. The little town is overwhelmingly Social Democratic. The sole radical in it has learnt only from experience. The mail-carrier, who has come back from the War, has learnt only to hate everything militaristic; and for this reason alone he makes his futile and private predictions of ill from the drilling Nazis. Otherwise the reader sees fascism in all the possible allurement of its first approach; its appeal to national sentiment, its revival of hope and virile action, its justifiable objection to the Versailles treaty, its plausible but erroneous ascription of the growing poverty at home to oppression from enemies abroad. Under the cloak of these sentiments, the essential rowdyism of the movement, its Jew-baiting, seem at first inconsequential; and the honest believers in democracy, as they quail before its banishment and give way to the pressure of business interests, are beguiled by the youth and vitality of their opponents.

The Last Civilian is really the story, so to speak, of the first Nazi. Hanns has the amiability of a Tom Jones, his open nature and lack of intellectual discipline. He falls victim to the Nazi illusions and is caught in the conflict of ambitions among the local Nazi leaders. In the microcosm of this small town are repeated the conflicts of types and interests that prevail from top to bottom in Nazi Germany. And the characters of the book present them fictively transformed. The strategist, Goering, appears as a clever, crippled, local politician. The homosexual, Roehm, becomes in the novel a sort of charming, well-intentioned Boy Scout leader. The publicist, Goebbels, is reproduced in the editor of the local paper, who forces his reporters to become liars and blackmailers. Only the Jew-baiter resembles in detail his original, Streicher, and he is made the immediate, effectual weapon of the movement, which gradually transforms the misery, the unemployment, the fine love of country of these young Germans into racial hatred and rowdyism. Hanns, midway in such a course, falls in love and withdraws. But the movement, sweeping on, ruins him and changes the atmosphere of the community into one of mad hysteria and universal suspicion, until the town is crushed and writhing in the power of a few blood-sworn conspirators who take their orders from Hitler, as our lesser American racketeers from the central authority of an Al Capone.

Such a narrative alone would be enough. But Glaeser has seen fit to add the corroding drop of irony. *The Last Civilian* is a German-American, who, disappointed by the crudity of American life, returns to his native city, where he expects to find under the Republic that democratic ideals have at length reached their haven. Under this fantastic illusion, he attempts to cooperate, as a wealthy, public spirited citizen, with the new democracy at the very moment when it is vanishing. The love feast he has arranged for all the village on his estate is broken up by Nazi Jew-baiters, and, his experiment a failure, he returns to the United States. But he brings back with him, as a warning for us, one of the most powerful novels written by a German radical in which an anti-Nazi point of view makes possible a narrative of significant form and characterization.

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